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THE HIGHLANDS OF CANTABRIA

THREE DAYS
from ENGLAND.



BY
MARS ROSS
AND
H. STONEHEWER COOP

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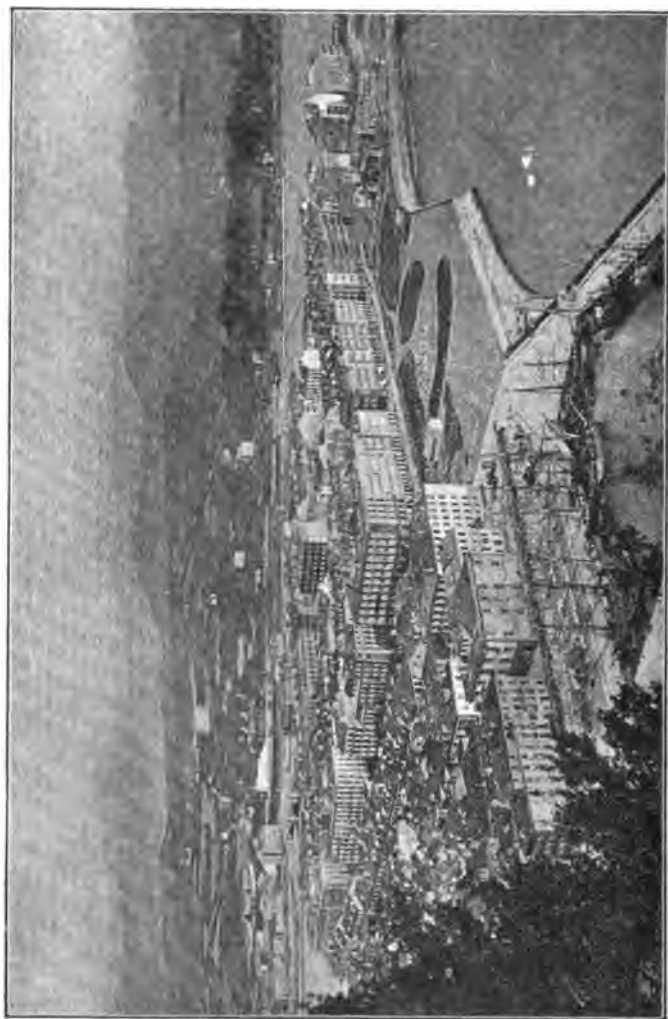
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The Century Club.

New York.



SAN SEBASTIAN FROM THE CASTLE.

Frontispice.

THE HISTORY OF THE

ROYAL NAVY

FROM THE

FOUNDATION OF THE

ROYAL NAVY

BY
JAMES O. BURNETT
AUTHOR OF "THE HISTORY OF THE
ROYAL NAVY"

LONDON:

JAMES O. BURNETT, MANCHESTER & LONDON

CROWN BUILDING, 18 FLEET STREET

1914

PRINTED BY

THE
HIGHLANDS OF CANTABRIA

OR
THREE DAYS FROM ENGLAND.

BY
MARS ROSS,
AUTHOR OF "MY TOUR IN THE HIMALAYAS," ETC. ;
AND
H. STONEHEWER-COOPER,
AUTHOR OF "CORAL LANDS," ETC.

WITH ENGRAVINGS FROM ORIGINAL PHOTOGRAPHS.

But bold Asturia from her rugged height,
With eagle eye beheld the changing fight.
And from her mountain throne came rushing down,
And sternly waved her glory gathered crown.

The Moor.

LONDON:
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON,
CROWN BUILDINGS, 188 FLEET STREET.

1885.

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PREFACE.

A FEW lines by way of preface are all that are required.

The pioneering of the Highlands of Cantabria and the writing of this work have not been unattended by labour, but it has been a labour of love.

Where joint authors' names appear on the frontispiece of a book, it seems only right that their respective share of any praise or blame which publication might bring about, should be justly awarded. In the case of the "Highlands of Cantabria," the choice of route, the mountaineering arrangements, and the very difficult task of taking the original photographs which illustrate these pages under conditions which would stagger the ordinary professional, to say nothing of an amateur, fell upon the author of "My Tour in the Himalayas," and to him also is due nearly all the translations of the Spanish Highland traditions that appear in the following pages.

Nearly all the purely literary matter is the outcome of the pen of the writer of "Coral Lands."

As the revise was made in the absence of the authors, one or two minor errors have been allowed

Cantabria
(RECAP)

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to stand. For instance, at page 120 read *buenas* for *bueno*. At page 286, in Mr. Morgan-Brown's poem, *where'er* should replace *wherever*. In processional order we reserve the most distinguished error for the last. At page 39 we are made to say, that we had "bitters with the Consul." The Lion and the Unicorn! For Consul, good critic, read Doctor. We have unintentionally sinned right boastfully, but on this white sheet we do our public penance. *Honi soit qui mal y pense* is a good conclusion to this expression of our unfeigned sorrow.

We have gratefully to acknowledge the kind assistance of sundry good friends.

For severe criticism in proof, our thanks are due to Mrs. Stonehewer-Cooper, the mother of the author of "Coral Lands," while Miss Jean H. Grieve's patient investigation into various Cantabrian matters, involving in their solution literary acumen of a high order, must be duly placed on record. To Messrs. Harrison of Santander, J. A. Jones of Gijon, and Christopher B. Cooper of Hampstead, acknowledgment must be made, especially to the two first-named gentlemen. We do not know if the shade of the late Dr. Wilson of Bilbao is aware that we have not forgotten his kindly assistance, but such is the fact.

MARS ROSS.

H. STONEHEWER-COOPER.

CHURCH END, FINCHLEY.

September, 1885.

INTRODUCTION.

IT is perhaps the result of one of those *cosas de España*, which from time to time have formed the puzzle of European statesmen, that Spain is generally so little known, even in this age of travellers, the latter half of the nineteenth century.

To the ordinary British tourist its very ports are, with the exception of a few places which can be counted on the fingers of one hand, hardly known at all, while Northern Spain is practically a sealed book. With a view of interesting our countrymen and others in a small way in what are really new fields for their study, recreation, and industrial enterprise, we have deliberately chosen for description a region of the Peninsula which is simply unique in its attractions of all sorts, and at the same time at their very doors.

The Highlands of Cantabria, whose mountain-peaks are the first glimpse of Europe seen by the returning traveller from the lands popularised by the discoveries of Columbus, are inhabited by a hardy race

whose proud title is *Invicta*. Like our countrymen of Kent and Cornwall, they have never been subdued, and the great Spanish monarchy, with all its magnificent traditions, sprung from a victory of these mountaineers in a defile which history has made famous for all time.

It was in 718, in the *cul de sac* of Covadonga, that the Gothic chief, Pelayo, with his noble band of about 300, struck terror into the Moorish invaders, and dealt the first of those series of blows to Saracenic interference with Spain and her people, which culminated seven hundred years later in the conquest of their last stronghold in the Peninsula, Granada. At Covadonga it was that Pelayo donned his iron crown as King of the Asturias, Leon, and Castile, its material being the points of Moorish spears, taken from chiefs that he had slain with his own hand; and here, too, the Spanish people are to-day erecting a noble cathedral in immediate proximity to the cave where rest the ashes of the founder of their nation. Almost every mountain and valley of the Cantabrian range has some tradition of that fierce and unequal struggle of the mountaineers for liberty, and they all appeal strongly to British sympathies.

The whole of its coast-line is more or less associated with exploits of our navy, and in one of its chief harbours, Gijon, the "Invincible Armada" was repaired, while from the self-same port the Asturian deputies sailed in 1808 to implore the aid of Britain to help them and their more timid southern

countrymen from the all-conquering grasp of Napoleon the Great, and so commenced a chapter in the ever-glorious Peninsular war. These facts speak for themselves as to the historical interests of this really most romantic region ; and it is certainly strange, in days when tours are personally conducted to the uttermost ends of the earth, to find that not only Messrs. Hachette's of Paris ' Guide to Spain ' omits to give altogether any account of the wilder parts of the Asturian mountains ; but even our own dear Murray is exceedingly defective—his geography having been evidently compiled certainly before the year 1868. The admirable new roads which the Spanish government have completed during the past few years throughout the Cantabrian Mountains, the enormous increase of steam communication between the north of Spain and Great Britain, owing to the extraordinary development of the iron ore industry, the gradual extension of the Spanish railway system, all now combine to make an exploration of perhaps some of the finest scenery in Europe a comparatively easy task. This description may, to some persons, seem overpraise ; but, judging from some little experience in the United Kingdom, Switzerland, the Pyrenees, the Himalayas, and the Sierra Nevada of America, and elsewhere, we claim it to be absolutely correct. The chapter on the sport which is to be met with in the Picos de Europa, and in the green valleys which nestle at their feet, should convey its own lesson to those who, finding it a fine morning, wish to go out

and kill something. Sleet and snow are, it is true, to be found in the Cantabrian hills at the right seasons of the year, but at other times the lovers of big game will, if going the right way about their business, not only enjoy a most exquisite climate, but also sport worthy of their weapons and their skill.

In this regard it is perhaps only necessary to refer to Mr. Harrison's experience in the August of last year, which in the following pages of this work is detailed at some length. The salmon fishermen, who pay so dearly for their privileges in the United Kingdom, should be acquainted with the rivers Deva and Sella. It is true these streams are open to all, and Sir Gorgius Midas himself has no better chance than the local peasant, unless he be a better master of the "gentle" craft—if that expression may be applied to salmon fishing. On reflection, however, this need not be an insuperable objection even to Sir Gorgius Midas, as it is possible that the temporary equality of his fishing in Spanish waters may break pleasantly the monotony of his plutocratic existence in Britain.

It is with bated breath that we would venture to speak of the mineralogical wealth of the beautiful country it has been our exceptional good fortune on more than one occasion to traverse. That the wealth is there is incontestable; that it is there in very large quantities no one who understands the grammar of mineralogy will deny. Whether, what in our opinion are invaluable deposits of all sorts of

metal in the more remote districts of the Cantabrian range can be worked at a profit, is for others to say. All that we can do in the meantime is to give the facts as we know them, after very careful investigation, and if good results from the publicity we give to those facts, so much the better for those who successfully investigate the claims of the fields to which just now we would point as finger-posts for systematic inquiry.

In 1862 the first 300 tons of iron ore were exported from the eastern extremity of the Cantabrian Mountains to Great Britain. The mines were not commenced to be worked for ten years after that date, and then, for three long years, the unhappy Carlist war not only blocked the progress of the trade, but nearly stopped it altogether.

In 1883 nearly THREE MILLION tons of iron ore were exported from the Cantabrian port of Bilbao alone. These things being done in the green tree, what will not be done in the dry, when the beautiful coast mountains to the north of Spain, rich in everything that can make earthly creation rich, are known as they should be known to the travel lovers, the artists, and the colonising capitalists of that country of ours, from whose shores they are only separated by three short days of sea travel?

Surely beautiful scenery, historical interest, and a people whose kindly qualities it is impossible to speak too highly of, and potential wealth of incalculable value, should certainly attract Britons to a country

so near to their southern seaports; but if we can interest them in the things of Spain, and so popularise the study of the language of Gil Blas among our countrymen, we shall certainly lay claim to having shared in a great work for their advancement, and the progress of the world at large.

After all things are said and done, it must be admitted that modern history tells us of only two great colonising powers, and by that expression we mean powers that have left their clear and distinct impress on the countries to which their sons and daughters have emigrated. These two countries are Britain and Spain.

While Britain has spread the tongue, which Charles V. rather foolishly said was only fitted for the cackle of geese, across the breadth of North America, from Plymouth rock to the City of the Golden Gate, and is now doing the same thing on the continent and islands, which know the "long wash of Australasian Seas," the language of Spain practically dominates the whole continent of South America; aye, from north of that spot where M. de Lesséps is now cutting a water-way to revolutionise Polynesia, to those straits called after one of the Peninsula's noblest sons, Magalhaens.

This huge continent is being rapidly developed, and, in its opening up British capital and industry should have its legitimate share; but if our sons are to succeed well in South American ventures, they will require to know something of the mother-

tongue of the countries whose greatness is yet to be. If English is, as some say, to be the language of the future, all that we can say is, that as far as Conservative Spain is concerned, and what were once Spanish Colonies, it is a very distant future indeed. Therefore, among other and very numerous replies to the question, "What shall we do with our boys?" we would beg to be allowed to suggest "Let them learn Spanish."

In concluding this introductory chapter to a study of a portion of Northern Spain, which maintained its average low death rate while the cholera was raging in the South, we would only ask our readers to go and judge for themselves, begging them to take in kindly good part the suggestions for their guidance which we have enumerated in our final chapter. We trust, indeed, to have our humble share in popularising the Highlands of Cantabria; but we fervently hope that the simple kindliness of the mountaineers we love so well will be spoilt as little as may be by the advent of those who will act as representatives of Britain and her people.

MARS ROSS.

H. STONEHEWER-COOPER.

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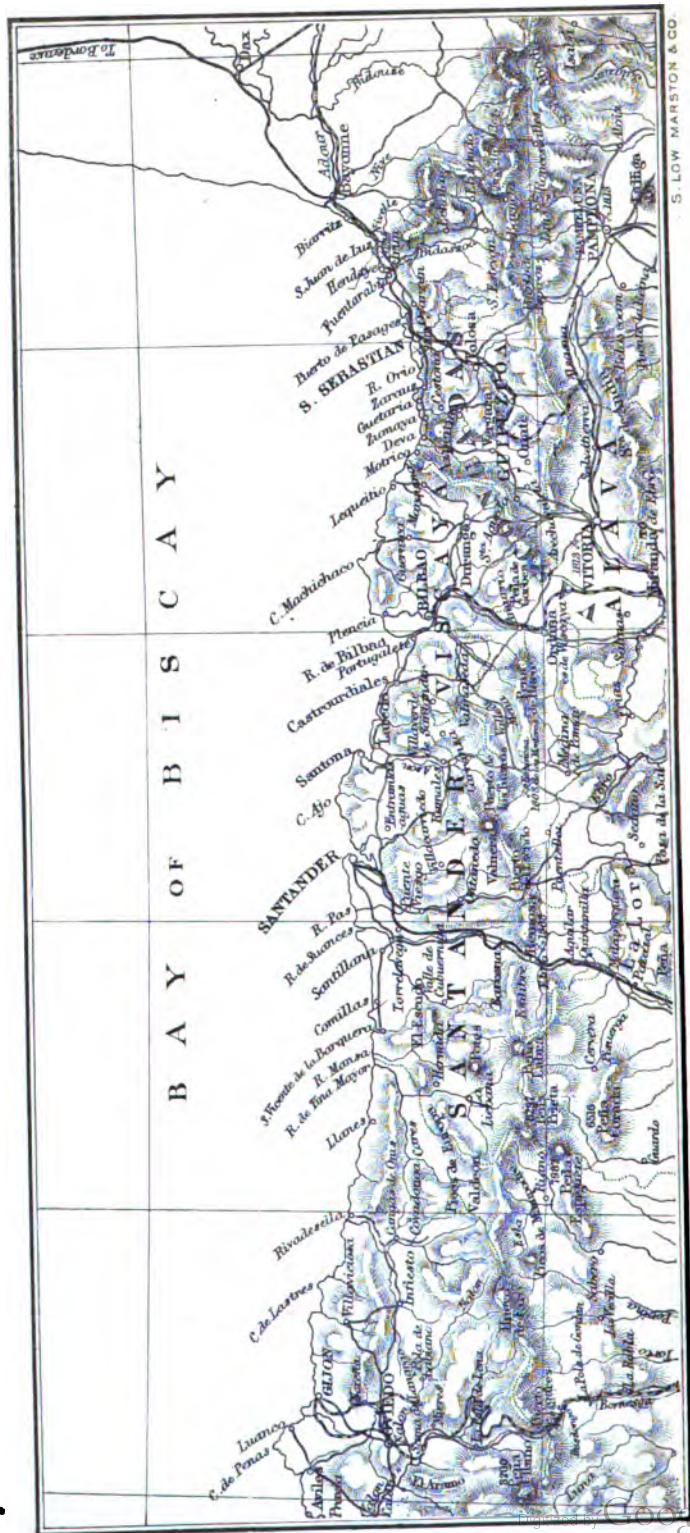
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MAP OF HIGHLANDS OF CANTABRIA, NORTH OF SPAIN.

THE
HIGHLANDS OF CANTABRIA;
OR,
THREE DAYS FROM ENGLAND.

CHAPTER I.

THREE DAYS FROM ENGLAND.

OUR work, which embraces the Cantabrian range of mountains, touching gently the seaboard, as its prominent and most interesting ports follow in succession from east to west of the Bay of Biscay, would be incomplete if we did not casually allude to the grand watering-place of San Sebastian, famous for its history of sieges and slaughter, and now for its peacefulness and beauty, and also to the more commercial port of Passages, linked to it by only a mile or two of rocky pathway. When heading our first chapter "Three Days from England," we intended to convey the idea that our beautiful mountains, and the scenery we are about to describe, the pleasures for the lover of the picturesque, the artist, mineralogist, sportsman, fisherman, and even the

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investor, might by three days' travel, either by rail through France, or by steamer from various ports, be enjoyed. The following work will, we hope, guide the tourist to any of the aspirations which may lead him to follow our footsteps.

Coal-laden steamers sail frequently from Cardiff or Newport to Passages; and for a very moderate sum, with good accommodation, those that care to "do" Cantabria may be landed at Passages, or, if afraid of the dreaded Bay of Biscay, which in our experience is often very smooth indeed, they can go through Paris and Bordeaux, and, passing the frontier at Irun, be pleasantly landed by railway at the selfsame spot.

We have seldom seen a port so peculiar as Passages; a long stretch of high bluff cliffs stretch from the French to the Spanish coast, against which the whole fury of the Atlantic Ocean constantly beats; and yet, here is a small opening between two cliffs, or mountains, through which, at all tides, large steamers may pass in deep water, and when inside, after steaming through a closely-rocked defile, ride in absolute and complete safety in a deep-water lagoon, capable of holding the English Navy and more. Passages, as known to the sailor, is but a wharf for coal or general cargo, discharged against the Railway Wharf. But to us, who desire to see Spain, not so much in its commercial as in its picturesque aspect, we select this port as a pure picture of a peaceful pool of water, a lake of infinite beauty,

so land locked by the mountains as to show shadows in its clear waters of wondrous intensity, to which is added a quaint old town, with its up and down streets; its ferries to nowhere; its absence of anything modern except near the discharging site, and we believe that a prettier port scarcely exists even in this wonderful country "Hispania." Landed at "Passages," a rail, taking a quarter of an hour, or a very pretty road on foot, three-quarters, and our follower, if he will be led by us, is in the magnificent city of San Sebastian, modern and ancient combined. On one side near the sea rises the stern heights, which, in 1813, cost so many lives to storm,* and on the other, built upon sand, literally piled up by the Atlantic Sea constantly driving into its open bay, unlike the land-locked Passages. The bay which forms itself here is quite open to the westerly gales, and nearly always great boulders roll upon its sandy beach, causing the greatest amusement to bathers, who here resort from Madrid and other large towns for their annual bath. Our photograph shows a fine city; but one rarely sees a nobler watering-place, and with all its historical interest for the Englishman, Spaniard and Frenchman, we are not surprised to see it beautifully laid

* The loss of the Anglo-Portuguese besieging force was 53 officers and 898 men killed, 150 officers and 2340 men wounded, and 7 officers and 332 men were missing; 70,563 shot and shell were poured into the devoted castle, and 5579 barrels of gunpowder of 90 pounds each were used.

out with splendid hotels, boulevards, cafés, theatres and the like on the very ground saturated with the ancestral blood of perhaps the pleasant and pretty loungers representative of the afore-mentioned three nationalities, who, careless of bygone days, forget the fact that their great grandfathers' bones perhaps mix with the sand they love so well. These summer visitors make San Sebastian a beautiful Spanish "Brighton," a really fashionable watering-place, and, perhaps, very attractive to the majority of tourists, although we have our own opinions about places to the westward, not on account of their facilities, or the accommodation offered by the localities, but that we think that more natural beauties are to be found where God has given the spot, the climate, and the necessities for a bathing-place, and man, with his levelling commercial tendencies, has not yet penetrated. We do not intend to describe St. Sebastian, for although not often visited by the English tourist, its very name is sufficient for the reader of this century's history to concentrate him upon the spot on which we first wish to land him, as an introduction to countries more wild, to scenes of hill and dale, of rock and mountain, dearer to us than all the tinselled display of modern towns.

From San Sebastian the traveller should proceed (if possible by sea) to Bilbao. The railway to that place passes through beautiful scenery, but the journey is a very tedious one.

CHAPTER II.

ACROSS THE BILBAO BAR.

It is strange that the river on which the prosperous port of Bilbao and its adjacent shipping suburbs are situate should be so little known by name. Captains who have sailed across the bay laden with coal from Cardiff, Newport, or the North, a hundred times, and discharged their cargo on the banks of the Nervion, call it Bilbao river, and they probably think life is much too short to make a fuss about its exact title. But it is a stream which boasts, as our transatlantic cousins say, a record of no mean order, and long before the British ironmaster thought of tapping the metal mountains that line its banks, small but stately argosies of the mediæval period sailed down its shallow waters, outward bound with cargoes of manufactured iron and wool. In the days when Queen Elizabeth ruled the destinies of that infant giant England, Biscayan iron exported from the port on the Nervion was the favourite metal of her people. Thus we find Shakespeare remarking: "Give me a true Spanish Bilbao blade." Those were the palmy days of rapiers; and

many a fighting weapon of the English and Scottish cavaliers was forged in the Ferrerias of the province of Biscay. Across the Atlantic, too, till comparatively modern times, the Nervion was known wherever flew the Spanish flag, for the colonists from the peninsula rightly preferred the flat and pig iron that came from its banks to that of all other rivals. However, about fifty years ago, or perhaps a little more, the exportation of American cotton into England crushed the Spanish wool trade, and the water wheels of the mountain stream worked Ferrerias were no match for the powerful steam machinery then being rapidly brought into use in Britain. About forty years ago *Ichabod* was written on the walls of the decaying city of Bilbao; but even then there were not wanting prophets who added boldly in its interest the word *Resurgam*, and they were right. These prophets had in view the probable vast development of Britain's iron industry; and they foresaw, in what now seems to us a strangely hesitating way, the demands that our countrymen would sooner or later have to make on the great mineral deposits towering by the side of their despised Nervion. During the life time of these clear-sighted gentry, they got the usual reward of the pioneer, in being told that they were fools for their pains; but their descendants have since reaped and are reaping the rich harvest then scoffed at, and not only for Biscay and her people, but also for thousands of our own countrymen; for although

Bilbao and its surroundings may be a *terra incognita* to the large majority of those who live within the sound of Bow Bells, it has been a source of greatly increased wealth for our leading ironmasters in South Wales, Glasgow, and the North, and countless English homes are kept comfortable by the commercial resurrection of the Nervion River.

A distinct bay forms the natural entrance to the Nervion, the points on either side being those of Galea and Luzuero, the latter being on the southern or starboard hand on a vessel making for the city, which, to a moral certainty, in America they would have christened Oreville. Passing the pilot station and the pilot village of Santurce on the right hand side, the prettily situated watering-place of Algorta comes in view on the left, and this place and its suburb, Las Arenas, the Brighton of the Bilbao people, are much resorted to during the few short months that our good Spanish friends think it not flying direct in the face of Providence to bathe in the sea. Good firm sands, pleasant looking villas, some rows of bathing machines, slightly improved imitations of the inexpressibly hideous English model, are part of the effects of these rising townships, the former named of which is also the terminus of the tramway from Bilbao on the right bank of the Nervion. When the wind sets in, as it can very effectively from the west and north, the sandy beach of Las Arenas forms a seascape worthy of the brush of Mr. Frédéric Sang of Paris. The huge ocean

rollers struggling fiercely in a desperate race as to which should first strike the Spanish strand, the flying spume of the white crests which show off the emerald clearness of the wave bodies themselves, is an old, old story of any coast where the sea has power; but old as the description is, the story of the sea in any of its phases is ever new, whether told or depicted to the sea-loving children of a sea-loving race, and we confess to belong to that class.

On the left bank on the river is now seen the important town of Portugalete, which in fact is just past the famous "Bar," whose disastrous moaning, to use the words of Kingsley, has wrecked many and many a fine ship. Before venturing to describe the town of Portugalete itself, a few words must be given to the history of this Bar, which in fact has been the dragon of Bilbao for centuries, and to destroy the ravages of which countless good and true Spanish St. Georges, aided by a miscellaneous militia of all countries—English in particular—have from time to time gone out to battle without attaining greater success than here and there affecting slight wounds on his sandy coat of mail. It seems, however, that at last the shipwrecking dragon is getting in a very "tight place," and if the citizens of Bilbao only do their duty for the next few years, they will, we trust, make a practical end of him altogether. He himself has lived far too long for mischief, and as while he lives he kills people, the cry of the Bilbao people should be a unanimous

shout of "*Delendum est repagulum*," or at any rate such limitation of his powers as to confine his destructive tendencies to a minimum.

According to the last information as to the progress of these works for the improvement of the navigation of the Nervion, they are expected to be completed about the middle of the year 1886, at a vast cost. The river is being systematically embanked from Bilbao Bridge to the pier at Las Arenas (immediately opposite to that of Portugalete); and several important cuttings to save distance have been made. The tendency of all this work will of course be that the river current will run much straighter than formerly, and by so acting prevent the accumulation of silt in the lower banks. But the most important fact connected with this resolute struggle of the Bilbao people with the inherent difficulties of the navigation of their river, is that at last vessels of about 2000 tons burden, and drawing 20 feet of water, are able to get up to the loading tips for the iron ore, and thus effect great economy in freights. Several dredges are at work between Bilbao town and the Bar itself; and the new pier, extending from the old pier head at the last named place, will certainly do a great deal of good. This new extension will have a length of 800 metres and will go actually beyond the bar for 50 metres. The new pier is being solidly made, being an iron structure binding and encasing with screw iron palings the rubble stone foundation, on which a concrete

wall will be laid to the height of an ordinary spring tide.

The following is a fairly succinct account of the efforts made by the local authorities in years gone by to improve the Nervion, and it will show how important has always been the difficulty of the Bilbao Bar. The whole struggle reminds one of that of the Clyde Commissioners with their river—but after making due allowances for the apathy, carelessness, and indifference of many of the Spanish authorities responsible for the state of the Nervion, it must in justice be admitted that the men who made Glasgow the noble port it is to-day had no shifting sand-bank with a heavy sea rolling over it to face, say at the Cloch Lighthouse. Before, however, recounting the early efforts, it should be stated that many prominent English engineers, including such names as Sir Charles Vignoles and Sir John Coode, presented schemes to the local authorities for making a large port of refuge on the bay to which a railway from Bilbao was to be prolonged. However, as both the estimates of these gentlemen exceeded a million sterling, their figures and ideas were too much for the perhaps too over-thrifty Bilbao merchants, and so the modest scheme of M. Churrua, now in progress, was finally adopted. It would perhaps have been much better to have gone boldly in for the “big business” of the Britishers, but “thorough” is not a note even of our friends the Biscayans.

In 1500 a Board of Trade was started in Bilbao, to regulate the mercantile operations of the port, and this being duly authorised by the Catholic kings of Spain, under the title of *Consulado de Comercio*, it exercised a powerful influence down to the year 1844, when it became known as the *Junta de Comercio*. The orders of this Board were very wise and practical, and it is certainly worthy of note that its ordinances, as approved by Philip II. in December, 1560, became the guide of similar institutions in many of the first commercial ports in Europe, and were adopted as a legal text in the whole of the peninsula. Perhaps the remarkable importance in trading matters, which Bilbao has, more or less, since maintained, is due in no small degree to this corporation and its rules. In the early ages of the trading history of Bilbao, as to-day, the existence of the Bar at the mouth of its river was the great obstacle of its progress, and in the year 1502 the Board of Trade of Bilbao saw the necessity of having some improvements effected in the lower reaches of the river, for even then it was a well established fact that the canal of the bar along Portugalete "was in a bad condition, and being also of a variable nature, was the cause of the wrecks and loss of life which occurred with no little frequency." A system of buoys brought from Holland was then made use of, and it is said that for a time they were satisfactory, but somehow or other their use was abandoned later on. In 1540 the Board was not content with

red tape and the records of past failures; they meant business; so piers were erected at Portugalete and Las Arenas on the right bank and just opposite the first named place, with a view of driving the much detested bar by the strengthened current farther out to sea. The piers were duly erected, but did not give much satisfaction, for in 1630 the ship-masters were loud in their complaints of the dangers of navigation to and from Bilbao, and as a consequence the King ordered the Local Board of Trade to open a regular enquiry into the losses of the past few years, and to add a report explanatory of the true nature of the bar and the river.

Much curious information was given in this ancient record of bygone Spanish commerce—information, by the way, which has its value to-day, and we quote a sentence or two. “During the 20 years preceding 1630 the bar at Portugalete commanded a depth of 20 Spanish feet at spring-tide and from 14 to 16 feet in neap tides. During that time 40 ships built in the Nervion safely crossed the bar, some of them having a burden of 700 and others not less than 300 tons. The bar moves sometimes to the north side and others to the south, and now and again to the north-east; it is merely composed of sand. The changes in its direction are principally produced by the gales and wash of the Biscayan seas, and the only remedy against this—as has been experienced of old—is a river flow.”

The first mention of Las Arenas quay is in the

year 1558, but before it a pier existed, which was erected between the years 1542 to 1550, and which was about 778 metres in length. The Portugalete pier or breakwater was already intended to reach as far as the breakers on the bar, and this is now the case, and once past this, vessels are in perfect safety and steam as in a canal by the picturesque town of Portugalete to Luchana—a place distant about three or four miles, where they take their turn at the tips for the minerals with which they are to be laden. The bar (which is about 465 metres in length) at the mouth of the Nervion still maintains its ancient reputation for mischief, and as the strong north-westerly gales from the Atlantic strike the Spanish coast, the huge rollers of the Biscayan Sea claim their Bilbao toll in life and property, as mourners and the underwriters at “Lloyd’s” know too well.

As previously stated, the watering-place of Las Arenas, with its pier, is on one side of the Nervion just south of the bar itself, and on the other is that town of quaint houses and steep hills—Portugalete. On the river front the place presents a modern appearance, however, and it is only in the centre of the town that you are reminded of its antiquity. The market—on Sundays attended by crowds of women very gaily dressed in striking colours, red and blue being prominent—is well worth a visit if time permits, and so is the ancient parish church, which got severely damaged during the Carlist war of ten years ago; but beyond some oak carving

over the high altar and a remarkable organ in the western gallery, there is nothing particular to notice. Those in quest of the real meaning of that hackneyed quotation, "an ancient and fish-like smell," should visit some parts of this Gravesend of Bilbao. The inspector of nuisances has a continual holiday; and the sewage and its gases work their own sweet will at pleasure. Towering above this really picturesquely-situated town is the conical-shaped mountain named Cerantes, and from the watch-tower at its summit a noble view can be obtained by those who do not fear the stiff ascent by means of the military road. If the Bay is in a peaceful mood—and it is a very much maligned bay to tell the truth—it spreads out before you like boundless fields of liquid azure. Now and again, glistening from the rays of a Spanish sun to your right, you can see the white breakers on the bar, the yellow sands of Las Arenas, the prominent houses of Algorta, or the Shakespeare-Cliff-like chalk promontory of Galea. Turning your back to the sea, you can see the windings of the Nervion on its way to Bilbao, easy enough to discover by a long procession of screw steamers, either slowly making their way up to the "tips" for iron ore, to discharge their black diamond cargoes, or, being "outward bound," heading for the "bar" with more or less presence of free board. But in justice to the British shipowner, it should be said that in nine cases out of ten when the free board is

“too little by a great deal,” the ensign that floats from the taffrail is not that of the Union Jack of Old England. A tramway follows the course of the Nervion and its estuary from Santurce to Bilbao; but taking one consideration with another it is not a pleasant road to travel. Roughly speaking, it is about seven miles of third-rate houses alternating with mineral railways; “tips” for the iron ore—heaps of the iron ore; pleasant looking, but very dirty people who ship the iron ore and land the coals; English and German firemen, who seem to spend their time in practically demonstrating against Sir Wilfrid Lawson and all his works; and the ubiquitous carabinero, who, with more or less of a slouching gait, is ceaselessly on the prowl (with a loaded gun) for somebody filching or attempting to filch pesetas from the Customs Revenue of His Majesty Alfonso XII. No, we will prefer the Las Arenas tramway for exploring these banks, and we will have to ferry the Nervion river.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE BANKS OF THE NERVION.

IF the halo of romance hangs somewhat about Twickenham ferry, it must be admitted that practical business dominates its numerous namesakes on the Nervion. The boats are sturdy and broad-beamed; the boatmen—with their blue jean jackets and trousers and the almost universal scarlet boina—which much resembles the broad Highland bonnet—are exceedingly picturesque, and very patient at the same time, as however crowded the trans-Nervion packet may be, if they spot an old lady with a basket a quarter of a mile off, they will wait for her to a certainty. It should be noted too that nearly all the women carry baskets, and practical athletics of no mean order are required to dodge those baskets in embarking and disembarking. Some of the landing places are very good, others require not only the presence of mind so much recommended, but also that of a good stick. Market women are just the same from China to Peru—a ceaseless chatter of indifferent Spanish; and the unapproachable Basque is maintained by the, for the most part,

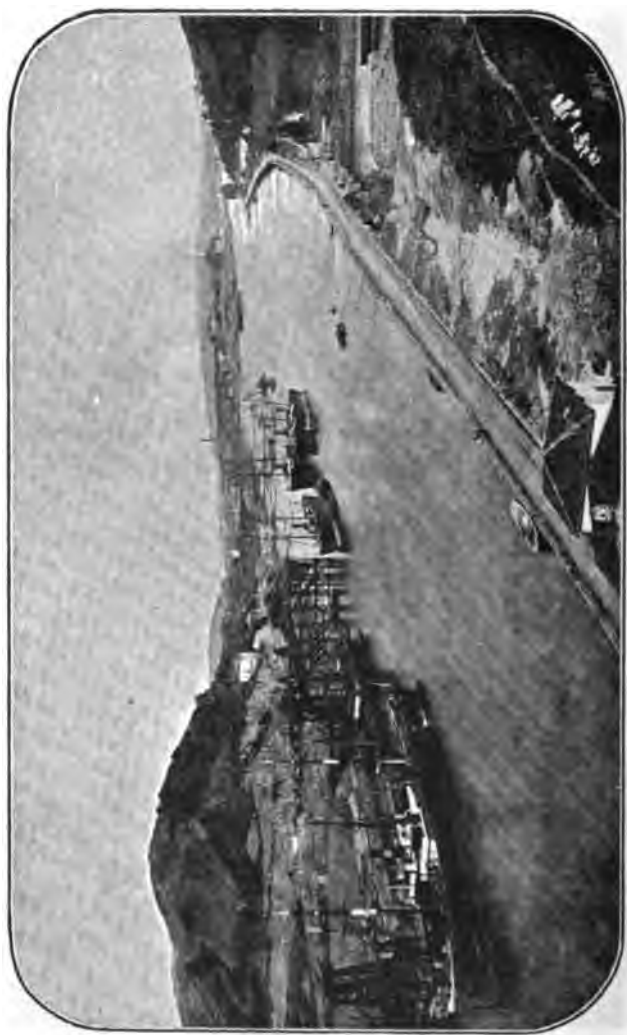
pleasant and good-humoured looking carriers of cabbages, pimentos, tomatos and the like during the few minutes' row across the stream, and then they separate on their various errands. The hills on the Las Arenas side of the river are not so commandingly tall as those on the other bank, and a belt of level land, in many places cultivated with maize, lies between their feet and the river itself. The Algorta-Bilbao tramway differs materially from many of our English institutions of the same name. Three mules abreast are driven, and a very rapid pace is kept up; there are no outside seats—smoking is, of course, allowed inside, and people are permitted to stand on the platform. In these cars it is no exaggeration to say that almost as much English is heard as Spanish, the preponderance of the British mercantile marine being perhaps more apparent at Bilbao than any other foreign port. Before entering one of these cars to run up to the city, a good look at Portugalete should be taken, and as the sun illuminates the windows of its French-looking houses and lights up the proportions of the church of Santa Maria, it is difficult to believe that this peaceful blinking sort of place was only eleven years ago the scene of one of the most severe bombardments of modern times—the wreck and ruin of the place being infinitely greater than that of Alexandria. On the 27th March, 1874, eleven of the Republican fleet bombarded the villages of Las Arenas—Portugalete and Santurce—and sent their shells over

the mountains into the very Carlist positions the " Liberal " land troops were attacking. Portugalete was simply rendered a mass of ruins; and the beautiful palace of Murrietta, where a girls' school had taken refuge from Santurce, was utterly destroyed. Santurce suffered too tremendously, as 560 shells fell into this harmless little pilots' village from the squadron. Portugalete more or less sided with the Republic, and only yielded to the Carlists after a forty days' siege, so the unluckily placed town fell between two stools, or rather, got it uncommonly hot from both sides, in that miserable civil war. Being, in fact, the key to Bilbao, the Carlists strongly intrenched themselves there, and barred the navigation of the river by stretching chains and cables from shore to shore, thus rendering the ascent or descent of the river impossible. These cables were overlooked by powerful artillery batteries, ready and very willing to sink any vessel that should attempt to cut them. The record of the blood-stained hills around the mouth of the Nervion is far too long to give here. But almost every field is the scene of where Spaniards killed Spaniards, and as you gaily tread the turf at the foot of Somorostro, you are walking in the cemetery of thousands of brave men. We are no prophets, and with politics we have nothing whatever to do, but the most painful and the only painful reflection about this part of Spain is that the old feud is smouldering, and that on the least excuse there will be more brotherly



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cut-throating, either for some Republic, "one and indivisible," or for Don Carlos and the *fueros*, or provincial privileges of the Basque provinces, which, whether for good or evil, have been done away with by the Madrid authorities. Between Las Arenas and El Desierto, the run by the tramway is entirely rural, but at the latter named place you enter what is really a flourishing suburb of Bilbao, from which city it is exactly six miles distant by the cars. The handsome river stone wall, with numerous landing places, continues all the way from Las Arenas to Bilbao, and it is utilised in a remarkable way at El Desierto, as it forms a handy seat for a great number of men, who, having nothing to do, decline to go into the market place in search of work. Apart from the intelligent male native, who finds the wall a convenient lounge, it is really an unspeakable boon to the British fireman, who, having had quite enough of the infamous poison sold at some low grogshops "down the river," naturally lies down in the middle of the road to get his hard-earned sleep, and then it is that the river wall prevents him rolling over into the quick-flowing Nervion, and perhaps going out to sea again—as a corpse. We say the *male* native; the women work, and with a vengeance; in landing the coal or bringing the iron ore in peddling calicoes and sheetings, in reaping the wheat or tilling the soil, the women are there to the fore, always working, singing, and apparently always happy. Perhaps not a prettier

labour sight, if regarded from a serious point of view, is to be had than that of the hundreds of women of all ages—from the old veteran of past seventy to the little mite of six or seven—discharging a coal-laden steamer in the Nervion river. Every woman carries her load on her head, and gaily humming some plaintive air, thinks no more of a load of more than 120 lbs. than we should of one of ten. Practice makes perfect; and from very early age the girl-children learn to carry weights steadily on their heads, and as their years advance the burden is of course increased, till really marvellous quantities of coal or ore are carried with ease in the simple fashion of the milkmaid of the stage. These women are paid by the day of twelve hours, and earn about 2s. to 2s. 6d. per day when trade is brisk. About the same time that the little girl has mastered the art of carrying a loaded coal basket on her head, and in a fashion becomes a bread winner, her brother has acquired that of perfectly rolling and smoking a cigarette, so that quite early in life they are wisely prepared for the occupations of their later years. The stores at El Desierto are numerous and good. For beds and hotel accommodation, "Morley's" stands supreme; for ship chandlery and coals, the large premises of the Seville Oil Company, and that of El Siglo; for casual refreshment, the houses of Mariana Rios, Garcias, Pedro Barcena, Café Progreso and Curling's may be recommended. These are in fact the clubs of the locality, and if one wants to find

anybody, you naturally look in at one of the cafés attached to the stores, rather than chance the almost certainly hopeless errand of calling at his house. El Desierto is a hamlet of the mountain village of Erandio, distant some two or three miles away, and the Alcalde of that place only allows one licensed butcher in the place. The prices this individual charges are fairly reasonable, but in parliamentary language, we cannot do justice to the toughness of his steaks. A full-grown shark would perhaps find them easy eating, but the average dog prefers a bit of soft wood to gnaw at. This *octroi* is strictly preserved at hapless Desierto, and on one occasion we were witnesses of the seizure of some fine looking beef, which a daring woman had surreptitiously brought into the district from Bilbao. As most people know of the absurdly prohibitory tariff (soon we hope to be altered) that Spain has for some years maintained against British goods, it will perhaps be unnecessary to remark that a good deal of smuggling of all sorts goes on, though in most cases the articles so brought into the country are intended merely for private consumption. The average Briton will, if he can, whatever semi-crazed moralists may say, smuggle in his tins of salmon, smokeable tobacco, or his cheap sugar, for his own personal benefit. When, however, the Spanish merchant thinks of decreasing his country's revenue, he makes a quiet arrangement with some high functionary, who becomes a virtual partner in the firm.

The influence of the English steamers is more remarkable at El Desierto than anywhere else on the Nervion. Most of the stores have English or quasi-English signs, as "Peter Boatman," and "meat of fine fresch bullock;" but we must really caution our good friend, Mariano Rios, that "Peach suplid" is doubtlessly very well intended for "pitch supplied," but it won't stand even our standard of the language. The English colony is strong, and it is also strong in dogs. An Englishman is usually more or less "doggy;" but it is a marked feature at El Desierto. As you stroll along the embankment it reminds one of the little-known lines of Tennyson—

"Dogs to the right of you, dogs to the left of you,
Dogs all in front of you, volleyed and thundered;"

and that is exactly what they do at El Desierto. Not far from where the handsome warehouses of the Seville Oil Company raise their dark frontages to face the left bank of the Nervion a perfect avalanche of dogs may be expected, who "go for" the passing tram-car in a delightfully bandit fashion; failing the tram-car, which will not stop for them, they look around for other dogs to quarrel with, and when they have found those other dogs the experienced traveller should take refuge, say at Garcias, and wait till the canine pandemonium is over. Spaniards have often been accused of unkindness to animals; it is a matter of certainty that they do not love them in the same sense that we do, nor does the fact that they are

humble friends and companions strike them in the same fashion as ourselves. But in our somewhat vigorous experience of, at any rate, northern Spain we cannot say that we know of any case of deliberate cruelty to animals beyond the bull fights themselves, or caused by poor untutored urchins who know no better.

At El Desierto a terrible warning exists, a warning to philanthropic ladies and gentlemen who wish to start institutes for seamen, and so reclaim our reckless tars and firemen from over-devotion to the cup that cheers and inebriates very much. Some time ago some good people determined to start a Seamen's Reclamation Factory at El Desierto, and finding that the line of stores and public houses was on the embankment of the river itself—placed however a few feet back on account of some question of ancient right of way—the wiseacres referred to placed it some seventy yards behind the rear of the houses, and only to be reached by crossing a field, of course unlighted. When it has been raining, and there is no mistake about the rain in Biscay when it means business, the footpath of ordinary earth is not exactly perfect, and some injudicious persons have left shoes therein as mementoes of their attempt to reach what ought to be the sailors' home on the banks of the Nervion River, and which is certainly nothing of the sort. The building itself is fairly substantial, and it ought to be so considering the sum it cost; and on entering it you will find that in

nine cases out of ten you have the New Seaman's Institute entirely to yourself. On the right is the library and reading-room. You are perhaps a stranger to Spain, although not a mariner, and you look forward to spending a pleasant hour or so at a sort of English club-house which may remind you of home. There are plenty of newspapers about—that is to say, you can read the *Record*, or the *Christian*, or numerous other journals of the same class; but with the single exception of the London evening *Globe*—a little in advance of Jack and his friend the fireman be it understood—not a single paper at that reading-room would appeal to the interests or sympathies of nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand English seamen and firemen who visit the Port of Bilbao. Of the “library” little can be said, because there are so few books; the great majority of them have never been read; and as they all seem to have been written in the direct interests of very gushingly Evangelical Sunday School teachers, of about eighteen years of age, it is not likely they ever will be. There is a fair billiard table used now and again by some of the captains and their long-shore friends; a bagatelle board more or less out of repair, and a “bar,” where the harmless lemonade and the soul-inspiring soda water can be had at the price of fourpence per bottle. The one redeeming feature about this ghastly attempt to make the lives of Jack and Tim in Bilbao River more sober and comfortable is the courtesy of the warden of the

place itself, an old man-of-warsman we believe, who does his utmost to make those who visit his desolate Institute as comfortable as anybody can feel in a kind of deserted chalk-pit with the wind in the east. O you good souls, who find the money for these and other silly exhibitions of coin excess and no brains, pray do the whole of your duty and find out what Jack and Tim really want when they seek the Spanish ore on the Nervion River. The "Converted Cowkeeper of Camberwell" may doubtless be an excellent work in its way; but the *Illustrated London News*, or *Punch*, or *Moonshine*, or the other comic papers, are more to the point. The *Record* has often very valuable theological information in its pages; but we question very much if we had been "trimming" across an angry "Bay," we should prefer it to a good secular weekly paper. Then again, why not have genuine "sing-songs," as we used to call them in the colonies; Dick or Harry in the chair, everybody doing their best, and joining in the choruses. Call them music hall choruses if you like; is it not far better to be indifferent to the claims of Wagner, and sing comic songs in a well-regulated place of real entertainment, in a real Seaman's Institute, than be virtually turned out of a sham one's doors, only to drink death in solution at a neighbouring dram dépôt? We write strongly, for we feel strongly on this subject. You can take a horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink. Jack and Tim the fireman are taken to Bilbao

because they have to go there, but they are far too human to care aught for the New Seaman's Institute at El Desierto or to enter it, even when taken to the roadway that leads to the field that lies before its doors. Temperance—aye, and total abstinence too are, we are told, making rapid strides among our people, and no one wants a helping hand more than on the road to even fair moderation than our typical Jack and Tim. Fad-forcing is a bad business at any time; at El Desierto it is simply wrecking a movement righteously intended. Let the seafarers be treated as men, not as a lot of sickly goody-goodies; and if some of them have not yet attained to the heroic virtue—if so it be—of total abstinence, let them drink in their own hearty fashion “Sweethearts and Wives” in good English or German beer on Saturday nights, without the suspicion that around the corner somebody is waiting with a tract on the evil of habitual drunkenness. If the New Seaman's Institute were to act up to its title, it would seek the mental and moral improvement of every English-speaking sailor who visits Bilbao; as it is, it only appeals to those who care for the most rigid form of Puritanism of a fossil character, and the eccentrics of all creeds who think that without total abstinence there is no salvation, either in this world or the next.

What is really wanted in the case of the New Seaman's Institute is that it should quickly be made an unsectarian affair altogether. A working com-

mittee of laymen, with genial sympathy for Jack, and who know his ways, should take the whole affair in hand, ask if necessary for aid and sympathy in England, and if the proper men were only appointed, they would soon galvanise into useful and honourable existence the unhappy corpse in the field at El Desierto.

CHAPTER IV.

THE UNCONQUERED CITY.

FROM El Desierto to Bilbao the cars take about forty minutes; and, availing oneself of the platform, one can get a good view and note all that is to be marked, learned, and inwardly digested in this portion of Spain. Perhaps the first objects that would strike the eye are the two huge Spanish smelting-works, its huge chimney-stacks being visible for a considerable distance. The "tips" at Luchana are also very conspicuous, but we shall have more to say when we deal with the vast deposits of mineral wealth which surround the city of the beautiful bay—Belle Vao, modernised into Bilbao. The windings of the river Nervion have suggested to one inventive gazetteer that the mariners' phrase, in the Bilboes, is derived from the perils of the navigation of the stream in the old days of sailing-ships. Be this as it may, it is certain that even with powerful steamers and plenty of tug assistance, there are plenty of minor dangers to be met with, either in making for the "tips" or leaving them. At high tide the river presents the appearance of a huge steamship

procession, as the really stately screw colliers or steamers in ballast thread their way up through the narrow reaches. The exports of ore alone in 1884 being about three million tons, the tonnage to and from this comparatively little-known port puts it in the front rank of the shipping cities of the world. The "entered" tonnage of Bilbao comes immediately after Liverpool, London leading the van of the world with over eight millions, New York following close on to this total with seven millions and a half, while Liverpool shows a little less. The tug-boats—all of English build—must do a very handsome business, as they are seldom or ever idle. Until the recent depression in the iron trade, the ceaseless cry of the iron smelters in Britain was "more ore, more ore!" and so the Nervion was at times dangerously crowded with vessels anxious to get the precious material for the hungry British and German furnaces. To those who fancy the "colliers" of Cardiff are like the more or less ancient craft, whether steam or sailing, that carry London's sea-borne supply of coal, it should be stated that many of these vessels not only possess beautiful lines, but are patterns of cleanliness as well. Take such craft as "Ware's Yachts," as they are called—notably the *Rayleigh's Cross*, or Messrs. Cory's *Rougemont*, and it would be difficult to believe that they are colliers in at any rate the outward bound service of their sea travel. Small passenger boats ply in the summer months from the bridge at Bilbao to Portugalete, but

the favourite way of reaching the sea front is certainly the tramways on either side of the river, the fares being very low, only a few pence taking one all the way. There is little to say about the suburb of Olaveaga, which lies between El Desierto and the city proper. The opposite side of the river from this village, however, has a thoroughly black country look, and were it not for the clear blue of the Spanish sky and the pleasant heat of the northern Spanish sun, one would be inclined to think that somehow or other steamers had managed to reach by a ship canal, let us say, that most delightful watering-place, Dudley Port, and that you were once again enjoying its scenery and smoke. To recapitulate all the iron-works in this locality would be out of our province; but mention must be made of the famous ferreria of Messrs. Ybarra and Company. It is the furnaces of these gentlemen and their rivals that light up on dark nights the windings of the Nervion river. Some little distance beyond these tokens of civilisation and poisoned air, we see a little spot on the same side of the river (the left), and that is the English cemetery, poor Jack's long home in nine cases out of ten. Perhaps a prettier or quieter burial-place does not exist in Europe. The land has been granted by the Spanish authorities in perpetuity to the British Government, and the place is not only well-planted with cyprus and other trees, but the paths and surroundings are kept in the most perfect order. Too many of the occupants of this

beautiful little Campo Santo of our people came there through the treacherous bar at the river's mouth and others; and also far too many hastened their occupation of a site in the cemetery by another bar, the bar where rank poison was sold as honest stimulant. If, instead of endeavouring to make people sober and pious by Acts of Parliament, Governments would insist on the purity of every glass of beer and whisky sold, the cause of temperance would be practically won. It is not altogether the quantity but the character of the wretched stuff that makes Jack "miss stays" in public. Many a man drinks just as much as he in a sumptuous club, and walks down Pall Mall with head erect and sober as a judge, the fact being that he has partaken of an unadulterated article; while Jack, who is falling around generally, has partaken of nearly unadulterated poison. If we had our way with the retailers of this bad drink the inquisitiveness of the Holy Inquisition would be nothing to it. A few weeks' hard labour beneficently bestowed on some rich gin palace robber of the lives of the people would stamp the evil out. The police all down Bilbao river are very kind and considerate to the failings of the seamen. If, however, Jack insists in making a perfect nuisance of himself, and declines to pay any attention to the repeated admonitions to be quiet and orderly, the police reluctantly take him to the local lock-up, where his initial punishment is in most cases a well-deserved flogging, and this is followed by a few days'

detention on a boarding fare which is certainly not luxurious. As with our enemies the garotters, the sailor who has had one beating at the hands of the Spanish police seldom or ever troubles the authorities again. Bilbao proper is now within view; a long line of handsome houses with well-kept gardens show the wealth of her citizens. The tramway ends in a public square called the Arenal, this is well planted with trees, and boasts seat accommodation, which is not few and far between. This Arenal forms a large triangle on the river bank, and together with the Campo Volantin makes a capital public garden. As it is near the railway station, which is just across the Isabella Bridge, a handsome stone one (near to which, by the way, vessels of 1000 tons burden have come up), close to the theatre and adjacent to all the leading mercantile offices, it may be characterised as the centre of the unconquered city, as the Bilbao people, who are mainly "Liberals," are proud to call their town, which has twice successfully resisted the besieging efforts of the Carlist mountaineers. The first was in 1835, when Zumalacarregrui, the great Basque leader, was directed by Don Carlos to attack the place, in order to satisfy the complaint of Russia that he had captured not a single important town in the provinces he said were so devoted to him. The whole thing was an absurdity, for Don Carlos knew very well that Bilbao would resist to the death, and if he had sufficient military prescience he would at once have pushed on to Madrid, which would have

surrendered without a blow, so great was the prestige of his victories of the north. On the 10th of June Zumalacarregui received a fatal wound while surveying the city from the height of Begoña, and with him practically died the Carlist cause at that time, for on the 1st of July his successor, Erasco, raised the siege. However, the followers of Don Carlos were not to be easily beaten, for they reappeared on the 23rd of October, and carried all the undefended positions on the right bank of the Nervion, the Christino general, San Miguel, making not even a show of resistance. It is more than likely that Bilbao would never have obtained the title of Invicta at this juncture had it not been for the British blue jackets, who came to the rescue of the Queen's forces and their incapable leader; to use the words of Mr. Ford: "Then it was that Captain Lapidge and Colonel Wylde, the real heroes, pointed out the true line of relief by crossing the river to Espartero, and, it is said, using towards him a gentle violence; then English sailors prepared rafts which the fire of the English artillery protected, and so the Nervion was first passed by Espartero; and next the Asira (a tributary of the Nervion on the right bank) was crossed at Luchana, and thus Bilbao was relieved after a sixty days' siege, in which the whole question of the war turned. The Carlists made a feeble resistance against the Christinists, who advanced in a snowstorm and bivouaced that night on the ground, without food and half naked, with true Spanish endurance of hardships."

The siege of eleven years ago will be remembered by a great number of our readers, and we have no space to dwell on this most interesting bit of modern history. Justice has hardly been done to the bravery and devotion of either side, in the lamentable war, by the British press—in fact we are unaware of the existence of any reliable English account of the struggle, but that it was a very severe one as far as Bilbao was concerned the following facts will show: Shells fell at the rate of 200 per day, frequently 22 in an hour; and although whole streets were fired, and many of the public buildings destroyed; the idea of surrendering never entered the defenders' heads; and the ladies of Bilbao were more prominent than the men in their fierce defiance of "no surrender." Pork, ham, and tongue were 5s. a lb., fowls 20s. a pair, dried cod-fish 3s. per lb., potatoes 60s. per cwt., and there were no vegetables, fresh fish, charcoal or coal. The defenders were justified in their defence; the squadron of the Republic settled the Carlist question, at any rate for a time, and the city of the "Beautiful Bay" thus claims also the proud title of the *Ciudad invicta*.

As you leave the Las Arenas tramcar in the Arenal, the Café Suizo meets the eye, and from about eleven to nearly two this is the favoured haunt of the English captains, brokers, and in fact of the whole of the English colony. We have heard stay-at-home Englishmen complain with some bitterness of the clatter French and Germans make at restaurants, but we think that if they visited the café we refer to,

they would admit that English master mariners and their friends can talk and gesticulate just as loud as any of the benighted "forriners" who annoy the insular John Bull in his "eating house." The last time we entered the Café Suizo—and it is associated in our minds with very pleasant memories and of good and true friends, of whom the pontiff was Mr. Ridley, and the assistant high priest the pleasant but unhappily now deceased English doctor, Wilson by name—a stentorian voice was calling out "It is *not* so, Dunlop," and we knew that the Briton was abroad. The Spaniards were quiet, reticent, and reserved; the English were laughing and talking loud, and evidently enjoying themselves to the full, although the Café Suizo, be it understood, is the centre and business exchange of the shipping trade of the capital of Biscay. In a word, it is a combination of "Lloyd's," the "Jerusalem," and the Royal Exchange located in a large room with a superfluity of mirror decoration, and where marble tables take the place of mahogany desks and forms. Little or none of the red wine of northern Spain is drank at the café proper (but it is always taken at meals), the favourite morning beverage evidently being Old Tom and Angostura bitters, while the well-known Anchor brand of Schiedam had its votaries. Indifferent English and German beer was also favoured. The tiresome monotony of the universal cigarette was broken here, and again by some barbarian of a Britisher insisting on smoking his briar root; and the talk was of "five tides" (sixty hours—Cardiff or

Newport to the Bar), the fearful state of the shipping trade, the general worry of the Custom House, the curse of quarantine, the whereabouts of General Gordon, and the insufferable ignorance which prevailed in England as to the capacity of Spain for a magnificent commercial future. Much also was said for and against the present government of the country, but we have nailed the flag of absolute neutrality to the mast, and that ensign alone can throw its folds to the breeze over the barque we have christened the "Highlands of Cantabria."

The statistics we have given show that Bilbao is a prosperous, busy city, and the signs of wealth that meet the eye at every turn show how much the iron ore harvest has benefited the place. Its population, however, is a small one, being a few thousands less than 40,000. Nestled in a valley at the foot of the spurs of the Cantabrian Pyrenees, it is hot enough in the summer, delightfully pleasant in spring and autumn right up to Christmastide; but in the first three months of the year, when the rain storms sweep over the Atlantic and across the Bay, it is not a place suited for those subject to pulmonary disorders. In the comparatively modern portion of the town situate near to the Arenal, the streets are very narrow and the houses very lofty; every floor possesses a balcony, and the effect of some of these wynds, as they would say in Edinburgh, is remarkably picturesque. Another feature of the ordinary Bilbao house is the universal projecting roof, which

in a fashion affords protection from wind and rain, and in the hot summer months from the sun also. Carriage traffic in these streets is not allowed by the authorities, but very narrow gauge tramways exist for the transport of goods. A curious way of carrying merchandise from one part of the city to the other exists in Bilbao; the package or packages are placed on a sort of sledge or solid piece of timber and thus drawn through the streets, reminding one, in a fashion, of the way in which, in the barbarous days of the "good" old times, our enlightened legislators ordained that the prisoners convicted of high treason should be dragged to the mangling block at Tyburn or elsewhere. And now for a word as to northern Spanish cleanliness. All the houses we inspected in Bilbao, and they were very many, were beautifully clean, and the same remark applies to the whole region dealt with in this volume. Whatever may be the case in the more sunny south, the oft-used English expression, Spanish dirt, cannot apply to the Cantabrian provinces. In most of the cottages in the villages by the mountain side even a Dutch housewife would be more than satisfied; and the spotless white of the bed-linen, with the lace-edged pillows, in every hotel, inn, or private house that we came across, would compare most favourably with certain British experiences of ours that need not be recorded in this place.

Bilbao is an early rising place, and long before the average Briton thinks of his bacon and coffee, the

town is alive, all classes being at work. The market place is a large handsome building, and is well supplied with meat, fish, fruit, and vegetables; prices are fairly moderate, beef being from 8*d.* to 10*d.* a lb. for any part of the animal, apparently no difference being made between a rump steak and the meanest bit of shin beef. The same curious want of classification extends to the juicy Spanish mutton, which is obtainable at 7½*d.* per lb.; eggs are very dear at 16*d.* a dozen. Among titles which the city by the Nervion has acquired is that of *Tierra del Bacalao*, or land of salt cod-fish, owing to its being the port at which the large amount of salted cod used in Central Spain arrived from the North Sea. About the 12th century the bold fishermen of the Cantabrian coast went away to the northern seas in search of whales, and doubtless introduced to their stay-at-home countrymen the nourishing fish food they found so abundant and so cheap on the Scandinavian coast. In 1881 no less than 10,045,517 kilogrammes of cod-fish were imported into Bilbao, of which some three millions came from Christiansand. As we are treating with the food supply question, it should be stated that there are a few good restaurants, the cookery at the Prussiana being good and the charges moderate, while the breakfasts and dinners at the leading hotels—notably the Fonda de Inglaterra—would not disgrace the meals at any ordinary French provincial inn. The charges even at the best hotels in Bilbao are remark-

ably low, and are inclusive in the American sense. Thus at the *fonda* just referred to, and which occupies the first floor above the Café Suizo, the tariff is only 6s. 6d. per day, and this includes a comfortable bed-room, attendance—which does not mean the privilege of pulling a bell cord and waiting for nobody—chocolate or coffee with bread and butter early in the morning, and two uncommonly “square” meals as the Yankees have it at one o’clock and about seven. These numerous coursed banquets are washed down by good generous Northern Spanish red wine, which is both gratis and *ad libitum*. These are all very practical details; and the reader, perhaps aghast at our nineteenth century way of putting things, will wonder if we are going to say nothing about the people and the public buildings. All in good time, good critics. We are taking you into our confidence, and you are going through Bilbao just as we did; and long before we made a study of the Basques, saw the famous bridges, admired the handsome church of Begoña, we had had some bitters at the café with the British Consul, and enjoyed a pleasant meal at the Fonda de Inglaterra. A few more lines devoted to purely every day and very unsentimental wants, and we will rush in headlong into architecture, the easily acquired Basque language (they say the devil stayed seven years in Biscay, and only picked up three words of Basque), and ethnology pure and simple. The Spaniards-English have an excellent club in the Calle del Correo—otherwise Post-office

street—and the balcony from its billiard room, where there are four excellent tables, is admirably situated for throwing down cigar ends and other delicacies on the unsuspecting English in the side walk—at least that is our experience; and another new club called “El Sitio,” or The Siege, and at this institution four English newspapers are taken, and strangers are politely admitted on presentation of their card. Things may be going to the deuce in the “city,” and Macaulay’s bogey may be getting his sketch-book ready for that long promised view of dilapidated St. Paul’s; but the British at Bilbao laugh well and heartily, and remind one forcibly of those pioneers of the old flag we have known under sunnier skies than even Spain, and near a bigger ocean than that of the Atlantic Sea. Being timid, unassuming beings, we did not venture to approach the august representative of the Lion and the Unicorn (whether fighting for the Crown or not), but were credibly informed that the office of the British Consul was somewhere near the railway station. The theatre, where we have heard some very good singing and fair acting, is close to the Arenal. It is not much to look at outside, but is comfortable within. The bull-ring will accommodate nearly 10,000 persons, and the fights take place every year in May and August. We have not the slightest intention of inflicting more annoyance upon our readers than our natural infirmities necessitate, so the usual two page-and-a-half description of the

ring, its humours and its horrors, is deliberately omitted here. There are plenty of other works on bull fights—for those who like them. One thing struck us, that perhaps it is a fortunate thing that bulls don't read Spanish, because as the unhappy victims are being driven up to the ring on the early morning of the bloodthirsty show, they are faced with a large placard which announces that their flesh will be sold at an alarming sacrifice on the following day. It is evident that there might be trouble with the bulls if they grasped the import of that notice.

Except down the road to Las Arenas and to Portugalete, where drunken Spanish and foreign sailors occasionally cause some trouble and use the knife or draw a revolver, the whole neighbourhood of Bilbao is remarkably orderly, and serious crimes are few and far between. Of that admirable constabulary force of Spain, the Guardia Civile, we shall have to speak at some little length later on, but the purely municipal police forces of a Northern Spanish town should be noticed. The local police are called the Orden Publico, or guardians of public order; these men either wear uniform or plain clothes, as required. In uniform they carry a cutlass-like sword, but their chief use is as detectives. The Sereno, or night watchman, is a curious survival to be found in Northern Spain, and for aught we know all over the peninsula. He is a gentleman of the truly Guido Fawkes order, with a long cloak, a

lantern, and a pike staff and rapier, and he chants the hours of the night and the state of the weather in a stentorian fashion, which those seeking the aid of Nature's gentle nurse are inclined to anathematise. "Past twenty-three o'clock and remarkably stormy," would perhaps be interesting as a jumble of an antique fashion with the new clock notion. But sleep is a blessing, and the cheerful Sereno does his best to destroy it. The Celadors again are another public body, and their chief business is to see that all doors, &c., are properly fastened in much the same fashion as the benighted City man sees the police giants of Colonel Fraser's command trying the warehouse doors in Cannon Street or elsewhere. The English stranger to Bilbao, who emptied his water-jug over the Sereno thinking he was a tile-prowling cat, and sought his revolver for the Celador, concluding he must be a burglar, narrowly escaped trouble, and is now remarkably well informed as to the duties of these two bodies of Spanish officials.

It was a fine bright sunny morning in October, when, according to an appointment with the late courteous Dr. Wilson (so well known in Bilbao), we met him at the Café Suizo and sallied forth to "do" the public buildings of the unconquered city. He prefaced the excursion by saying that for art critics there was little of high interest in so eminently a commercial town as Bilbao, but that there was much that was worth notice, and we found out he was correct. As we sallied forth from the café with

the words "charter party" and "sixteen feet aft" ringing in our ears, we met a party of ladies coming from the ten o'clock Mass at the church of St. Nicholas, which faces the Arenal. It is a saying as old as the hills, that really what a pity it is that the graceful Spanish mantilla is being superseded by the Parisian bonnet. The Bilbao ladies as a rule still cling to the former, and although their features are not so beautifully regular as are those of our fair countrywomen, who to every right-minded individual stand first in the world's beauty show, yet the grace of a Spanish lady's motion and the way she dresses might be studied by some of the wives and sweet-hearts who live in the foggy little island set in a Northern sea, and which we call home. The universal black, however, has doubtless its charms in a brilliant climate, but we cannot help the remark that the thing is a little over done, but we admit these criticisms of ours are rather "thin." We are treading on dangerous ground; the shadow of the great god Fashion comes before our eyes, and we must own, as all the male sex do in their hearts, that if Pope referred to the fashions of ladies when he wrote "whatever is, is right," he was perfectly correct in his observation.

The men ape English dress a great deal, and there is quite a class of Bilbao mashers who would do very well as supers at the stage door of our London Gaiety, and be hardly distinguishable from the regular band of devotees. Children seem very

numerous in Bilbao, and families run large. The church of St. Nicholas is a handsome circular edifice, with a noble high altar superbly ornamented with solid silver—this may be called the rich man's church, as it bears signs on all sides of the great wealth of the congregation which assembles there. Near the high altar in this church stands an old-fashioned tall clock bearing the name of a London maker of years gone by. The church of St. Anton, a building of the 14th century, is well worth a visit, if only to notice the hideous way in which it has been "restored." It is one of those places which must be seen to be appreciated. "Churchwarden's Gothic" in its wildest flight never approached the architectural horrors of this poor ill-used church of St. Anton. By far the most interesting ecclesiastical edifice in the immediate neighbourhood of Bilbao is the church of Begoña, situated on a commanding plateau, from which a fine view of the town can be obtained. From this spot Bilbao certainly looks exceedingly picturesque, lying, as it does, nestled in an amphitheatre of green hills. The church, which is dedicated to the Assumption of Our Lady, is of very ancient date, and on the feast of the Dedication, the 15th of August, great numbers of pilgrims from all parts of the North of Spain visit the church to pray before an image of St. Mary, which tradition says was found in the centre of an old oak, and this yearly pilgrimage is by far the most important in all Biscay. A very handsome picture of a procession

singing litanies to stop the plague adorns its walls, and the Stations of the Cross are remarkably well executed. It is said that the figures in the picture of the procession, which took place at the plague, are all portraits. Another bit of interest about this church is, it is evidently a place of great devotion for seafaring folk, as the walls of this really noble church are crowded with votive offerings of model ships, some beautifully executed, and pictures of marine peril, in most cases evidently the work of the sailors themselves. Some of these pictorial representations of hours of danger in the deep are really fair works of art, while others really stagger one as to their meaning. Previous to 1794 the church of Our Lady of Begoña boasted thirty-two splendid lamps of silver, but these had to be melted down to help the war fund required for the war with the French Republic. All these Bilbao churches are perfect models of cleanliness, and shame many of our Anglican and Catholic churches at home. Close to the shrine of Begoña, which the stranger should certainly visit—though he may grumble at the steep ascent, the road being in some places impassable for wheeled vehicles—is the Campa Santo, or cemetery, which is not particularly interesting, except for the fact that some very handsome mortuary chapels are being erected in it, and that in its centre is a monument to the soldiers who fell in the defence of Bilbao during the last Carlist siege. From the ages on the stones it is evident that in

this part of Spain, at any rate, old age is not a marked feature of the inhabitants. In this respect Biscay compares very unfavourably with Santander and the Asturias. Retracing our steps towards Bilbao again, and in a quiet street, we found a little half round door which bore this label:—*Expositos de Viscaya*, and we soon found out what it meant. It was in fact a branch of that magnificent system by which Spain has taken away all excuse for infanticide within her dominions. The undesired baby is brought, say perhaps in the dead of night; all that the mother or bearer has to do is to write a Christian name, and the date on a card attached to a bit of ribbon put round the child's neck, and, having touched a bell, the door opens, and going inside the opening of a sliding door, shows a kind of cradle attached to a hoist; the little stranger is deposited therein, the cradle-hoist ascends, and the poor creature, who in all probability has left her own offspring, can go away with a comparatively light heart, for she knows full well that that baby of hers will be well cared for, bodily and spiritually. That it will be well educated, and that when old enough, if a boy, he will be apprenticed to the army or navy, or some good trade, or if a girl to domestic service. Moreover, at any time she can claim her child free of all expense, simply by giving the name of the infant and the date of depositing it.

The children thus left are educated at a building architecturally worthy of its noble uses, and rightly

called the *La Misericordia* ; and this is one of the most striking edifices seen coming up the Nervion, as it stands out in bold relief at the top of a small hill as if in a fashion challenging the attention and soliciting the imitation of its merits by benighted England. At any rate, as regards this matter, Dr. Wilson had many a story of how, going on some medical errand in the early hours of a winter's morning, he has seen, unobserved himself, some of the poor, perhaps friendless mothers, kneel down on the pavement before the door of the *Expositos* in earnest prayer for a few minutes, and then, giving the unconscious baby one long, lingering kiss, touch the bell.

La Misericordia is maintained by Government grants and voluntary contributions from the well-to-do. For the donors, however, no parade in long newspaper lists, no gratuitous advertising ; all the reward they get in this world is the satisfaction of a good deed done. Comparisons are odious, so the reader must make them himself, but that they are obvious enough it is certain.

There is little real poverty in the Biscayan provinces, though the thrift of the lower classes often induces them to assume its guise. The professional beggars one meets with in the south of Spain are not very conspicuous in the northern provinces, where the stocking more or less full of gold coin takes the place of the bank account in Britain.

One of Dr. Wilson's stories illustrated the saving

and penurious habits of these peasants of Biscay. He had occasion to visit a farmer patient in the suburbs of Bilbao, and on leaving him was informed that another farmer, a neighbour, would like to see the English medical man. Accordingly Dr. Wilson drove some considerable distance and found the sick man lying in a bed in a house, which, to the Englishman's eyes, lacked the very elements of comfort. Putting it down to the most dire poverty, Dr. Wilson, in his good nature, merely charged and took a nominal fee, and went on his way rejoicing, inasmuch as he thought he had performed a charitable action. Some few days later he met his original invalid, who, in language more forcible than polite, intimated, pretty plainly, that the doctor was an arrant fool. "That man poor? why he is ten times as rich as I am!" he exclaimed indignantly. "He had an *onzas* (£4) in his pocket ready to give you, if you had only asked your ordinary fee for driving all that distance; and under the planks of his ground floor is quite a store of gold coins. Never judge by appearance in Biscay again, Señor Inglese." With all the Biscayan peasants' shrewdness in keeping money—and it is an old saying that any fool can make money, it is the wise man who keeps it—they have been frequently made the living butts of practical jokers in the towns by reason of their love of that filthy lucre that plays so important a part in our economy. Shortly before Christmas, a few years ago, an advertisement appeared in a Bilbao paper to the

effect that any one bringing gold onzas of the reigns of Philip V. (1700-24), or Ferdinand VI. (1759-88), to the office of the paper on the 28th December (Innocents Day) they would be paid in modern coins with a very handsome premium for the antique money. Innocents Day duly came along, and the tram-cars and roads leading to Bilbao were full of people from the country bringing in their hoards of gold coins of more than a hundred years old, only to be scoffed at by some impudent wag who wanted to learn how long the Biscayan farmers kept the golden pieces their great grandfathers had perhaps acquired.

The old Bridge of Bilbao, now disused, is a most interesting relic of the 12th century; it is practically an imperfect triangle but of beautiful proportions. Bilbao bridge forms the heraldic charge of the city arms, with two wolves on either side of it. Near the bridge, on the left bank of the Nervion, are the headquarters of the *Cargueras*, or female porters, who do all the hard work of the city for what would seem to our English notions very small pay. However, they appear to be contented, and so do the men, who go on smoking endless cigarettes, and, leaning up against a wall in the bright sunshine, never seem to murmur at their sad lot. It should be borne in mind that Bilbao is to a certain extent a Basque city, and that if one has to mix much with these female Pickfords or their sisters in the market-place, some knowledge of that language should be acquired. We have already referred to the fact that His Satanic

Majesty found the study of the language very difficult indeed, three words after seven years' hard work was not quick progress; and as a rule we should give *Punch's* matrimonial advice to those about to study this combination of all that is perplexing in ancient Irish, Welsh, and let us say Choctaw.

When we found out that the Basque name for Bilbao was Ibaizabel, we fairly gave the Basque matter up. Its guns were far too many for us. Be this as it may, several English ladies in Bilbao talk fluently in some mysterious lingo, which they say is Basque (it certainly is not Spanish), and they seem to thrive on it, as a Basque-speaking person at the market will certainly do better than he who only talks the language of lordly Castille. Volumes have been written about the ethnology of the Basques and their customs, and volumes more could be written, but as our more immediate task is towards the other end of the Cantabrian range, we have little space at our command, and as we go Westward Ho, we gradually leave the Basque influence. Still as we have been treating of what may be called a Basque city, a few notes about these most interesting people should be given, and they will be found in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V.

THE BISCAYAN PEOPLE.

THE three Basque provinces of modern Spain are those of Alava Vezcaya (or Biscay), and Guipuzcoa, and of these that of Biscay is the largest. These provinces, lying in the North West corner of the Iberian peninsula, formed the Cantabria of the ancient maps, and according to some authors this word is derived from Kent-Aber, or "corner of the water," and a glance at the map will show the reader how appropriate is the designation. Into this corner of Spain the last remnants of the Aborigines of Spain were driven, and like the Liberal city of their hatred—for the average Basque is a Carlist to the backbone—they have never been expelled from their mountain home, nor really subdued in it. Provincial rights and home rule have been their watchwords for centuries, and they have never been backward in fighting for their own. Cradled as they have been in the literally iron mountains that surround them, they have over and over again defended their liberties and land with the swords which the land produced. According to Señor Perochegai, the very

word Basque means sufficiency in self, as he says it is derived from Bayascogara, "somos bastantes;" and their knowledge of the weakness of separation has forced the inhabitants of these little understood provinces to acquire the strength of union, and their national symbol is three hands joined together with the motto Irurac Bat—equivalent to "Tria juncto in Uno." The Basque people have always with more or less success held their own against their Southern neighbours; but a thousand years ago they were unable to resist the invasion of the fair-haired adventurers from Norway, or as some say Scotland, and to this hour their blue eyes and light brown locks are marked features of many of their little known people. There can be no doubt that the original inhabitants of Spain had dark eyes with dark eyebrows, and generally speaking brown hair; while the Goths have always had the credit of having fair hair and blue eyes, though in some cases the hair was dark. We have no room in these pages to enter into the history of the various struggles of the Basque people; but it is worthy of record that in the 14th century the lordship of these three provinces having been annexed to the Crown of Pedro the Cruel, ceded the unruly little confederation to our Black Prince of England. But with true Spanish jealousy of the foreigner and all his works, he privately told the Basques never to let the Englishman take possession, which, as we all know, he never did. The worthless transfer was made on account of the services

of the English fleet at the battle of Navarette, when, in an ill-advised spirit of chivalry, our illustrious countryman took the side of the worthless Spanish king. The Basque *fueros*, or rights, have been modified from time to time, but their principal advantage to the population was an exemption from the conscription—the three provinces only being bound to contribute a certain number of soldiers when Spanish interests required a foreign war. As to invasion they would take good care of that themselves. Whether the law of July 1876, by which the *fueros* were abolished, will tend to keep the peace, is not for us to say; all that we know is that the bitterest feeling prevails against the enforced military service, and over and over again we have heard the Biscayan peasant farmers praise in a startlingly well-informed fashion the grand voluntary system of Britain, both for her regular and auxiliary forces. The Basques have no great objection to local military service like that of our Militia and Volunteers, and in time of war would certainly come forward in good numbers for foreign service; what they object to, and with our British training we can well understand the feeling, is the blood tax, which sends so many of their finest sons to fill tropical graves in Cuba or the Philippines. But, on the other hand, it must be admitted that while the Basque peasant makes a first-class guerilla soldier, he is not very valuable in a regular force, and the reason is not far to seek. The Spanish peasant, and especially in the northern provinces, is a man of

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strong natural sense. He seems to do little else than think, reflect, and analyse, and as proof of his powers of comparison, he often speaks by proverb or by analogy—a mode of expression indicative of reflection and comprehension of the connexion of causes and effects with each other. This quality of reflection may be considered as a proof of his fitness for military service, but it must be as an instrument animated by its own energies, certainly not as a part of a machine. In the towns the reflecting power of the Biscayan of poor means does not apparently show itself to more advantage than the best way of cigarette manufacture; but on the lone mountain side, whether as shepherd or labourer, the peasant has time for that grave thought which is so peculiarly Spanish. Knowledge does not altogether depend on books, and hence it is that though the Biscayan labourer may be and probably is wholly unlettered, yet he is unquestionably wise from the exercise of the faculties within himself on the subjects that are before his eye. A strong feeling of independence runs through the whole life of these people, and it is perhaps best expressed in the idea that a Basque man earning weekly wages in a cotton factory would be a simple impossibility. Perhaps the fact of universal nobility for those born in the three provinces referred to has much to do with their sturdy pride and love of freedom. Like the Irish, Welsh and Highland Scots, they are very tenacious of all genealogical matters, and this affection for

family trees and coats of arms amounts to what is practically a craze with many. Their conservatism is decidedly of the fossil order, and their passionate love for their own provinces, their old laws, and their own traditions, can hardly be expressed in too forcible language. What was good for our great grandfathers is good enough for us, is their motto, and they abide by it in nine cases out of ten, at any rate, in the rural parts of the Basque provinces. Strongly built, they are a sober, active race, almost insensible to the changes of heat and cold, reserved in speech and conversation, easily led if their independence is respected, but the very reverse if they have got the notion into their heads that they are being made servants of. Their games, like those of the Asturians, of which we shall speak later on, are on all fours with true Basque gravity. Unlike the typical Spaniard, familiar to the mind's eye of many an English reader, they know next to nothing of the use of the knife. Their weapon of offence or defence—and from which they derive their principal amusement on Sundays and Holy Days—is a knotty oaken shillalah, and which in their hands is a very terrible weapon indeed. That they are expert single-stick players it need hardly now be said, and at tennis (not that of the lawn order) and skittles they are perhaps without rivals in Europe. By far the best sailors to be found in Spain, they are excellent oarsmen and fishermen, taking kindly to the salt water, which strikes their iron-bound coast.

Their skill as oarsmen is so famous that a well-known authority used to say that "the highest fed boat's crew in the English nation does not equal a boat's crew of Biscayan fishermen."

The peasant women in the rural parts of the province of Biscay, and in fact all along the Cantabrian coast, are every bit as laborious as their sisters on the Nervion or in the towns. Fresh-coloured in complexion, with ruddy cheeks and bright blue or brown eyes, they are really comely specimens of northern Spanish female beauty, especially when young, when their light-hearted gaiety adds to their other charms. But hard work and plenty of it soon ages them ; but this is not so much the case in the agricultural districts as among the coal-porters and other women, whose hard labour is done near the tips of Luchana. The younger women generally go bareheaded, while their elders cover their heads with a muslin kerchief tied in front, while the two ends gracefully float behind. With the bright colours of their dresses, these clean muslin headdresses make a most effective contrast, especially on Sundays and feast-days when dressed in their best.

The first agriculturist was unquestionably Adam ; so farming the land is primitive enough for this primitive people, and does not lessen their nobility. They hold, and rightly too, that though "Adam delved and Eve span," he was the first gentleman of his time, and the Basques who are not engaged in fishing follow his footsteps. The farms are, how-

ever, small, though as a rule well cultivated. About five acres may be taken as their average size, and this means just the sort of plot that a man, his wife, and family can manage to work. Agricultural machinery as we understand it in England is practically unknown—the antique prong fork or mattock being in daily use. The use of the plough is hardly old-fashioned enough to be common in conservative Cantabria. When the day's labour in the fields is over, the Basque peasants will often assemble for dancing and gossip, but the time to observe the local devotees of Terpsichore is after the last Mass on a Sunday morning, when some really pretty dancing can be seen. The musical instruments cannot be recommended. The *tamboril* and *pito* make noise enough, and those who like noise pure and simple will appreciate the accompaniment of a Basque *al fresco* ball. The dancing itself is very much after the Highland Scot, or Irish type, and many of the younger women are particularly graceful in the complicated evolutions of *zorzico*, or movements of eight persons. In fact, in their religious fervour, their games and amusements, in their virtues and vices, the Basque people strongly resemble the Celts of Britain and Ireland at home; and, as we have said, their language has a remarkable resemblance to Professor Blackie's pet idiom. One authority, Percohegai, states that there can be no doubt whatever that Adam spoke Basque, as being the language of angels; but this is such an evident

slander on the good taste of the heavenly choirs in a matter of musical importance that we decline to give any credence to the legend. It is likely enough, as Humboldt says, that Basque was the universal language of the peninsula, and Mr. Barrow is of opinion that the original inhabitants of Spain, the remnants of whom are the Basques, brought it from Tartary, as he states that it much resembles the Mongolian, and has a decided element of Sanscrit in it. Be this as it may, the Basque name of a village about a mile and a half from Bilbao is enough to stagger the most word-hardened student of Welsh or ancient Irish. This aforesaid village, well known for its famous mineral spring, its old and at one time very rich copper mines, and its splendid views of wild mountain scenery, is pleasantly but hardly briefly described as *Yturriberrigorrigoicoerotecolhea*. The German compound words, which, as Mark Twain remarked, take good-sized lines, and then go round the corner as it were, are hardly in the race with this alphabetical procession of Basque. Being interpreted, this verbal phenomenon means something after this sort:—"If you follow the footpath and cross the hill, keeping to the right of somebody's house, and then look out for a large heap of stones, that is the place where the spring is." Fancy anybody bringing in St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey, and the Crystal Palace, and Mark Lane Station on the Inner Circle Railway, to define the name of the place where the Monument could be found; but that is

how they manage these things in Basque-land, and yet no dentist earns a living there. We confess we are no authorities on the question of Basque pronunciation, but the Andalusian joke is certainly true, that these good people write Solomon plain enough, but persist in pronouncing it Nebuchadnezzar.

If the young Basques are dancing mad, they are not over given to matrimony, unless indeed the fair bride has *dot* enough to enable her lord and master to retire in graceful and wall-seeking idleness for the rest of his life. This makes the fair sex thrifty as to pesetas, and careful in collecting furniture, as the possession of these two necessities is their only chance of being mated. It will not be wondered at, therefore, that such songs as the following are decidedly popular with the bachelor Basques. We give it in the original Spanish, and also a free translation in English :—

Una me lava la ropa,
Otra me da de comer,
Otra me cose mi vesta,
¿Porqué quiero mujer?

Or in English—

If a woman will make all my hose,
And another me feed without strife,
And another puts buttons on clothes,
What the de'il do I care for a wife?

CHAPTER VI.

THE WEALTH ROUND SOMOROSTRO.

IN our opening chapter we referred to the enormous exports of iron ore from Bilbao to Britain and Germany, and before we leave the immediate neighbourhood of the unconquered city for the Highlands proper, some detailed account of this gigantic industry should be given. To an Irish gentleman resident in Bilbao is due the credit of being the first to practically introduce Spanish iron ores into the British market. In 1862 he shipped some 300 tons as an experiment to a famous north country firm of ironmasters, who, with the proverbial unreadiness and dislike to novelties in trade of the Anglo-Saxon, soon let the shipper know that they did not want his ore at any price. After some voluminous correspondence, the far-sighted firm referred to offered to use the consignment lying on the quay, provided that the shipper would guarantee that the ore would not damage their furnaces. This, however, that gentleman declined to do, and we believe that the parcel was afterwards—but years afterwards—sold for a mere trifle to a Glasgow house, who were not

afraid of making an experiment. Whether they at once tried the new-fangled importation or not we do not know, but it was not till the iron famine of 1871-72, when pig iron reached almost fabulous prices, and gambling on its rise and fall was universal, that a rush was made for the hidden wealth of the mountains surrounding Bilbao. The complete returns for the past three years are not available, but we know that in 1881 the amount of iron ore shipped from Bilbao was close on three millions of tons, of which two-thirds came to British ports. In the four years ending 1881, Britain took 5,041,054 tons of this precious stone, France 935,381 tons, and Germany (*via* Dutch ports, for it nearly all went to the works of Messrs. Krupp at Essen) 858,721 tons, and Belgium secured 277,889, and the United States only 75,645 tons. In regard to these British imports, the report of the Iron Trade Association for the year 1881 says: "The most noticeable feature of the past year, so far as the trade in iron ore is concerned, is the very exceptional increase of the importation from Spain and other countries. Within the last twelve years the rise of importations of ore by the United Kingdom for iron-making purposes is from 114,435 tons to 2,634,401 tons, or 2,200 per cent. Within the same period the make of pig iron in the United Kingdom has increased to the extent of 55 per cent. Evidently, therefore, the iron ore resources of our own country have not only quite failed to respond to the demands of the pig iron makers for the special practices of ore

employed for Bessemer purposes, but they have largely given place to the imported ores, of which hæmatite ironmakers now so largely avail themselves."

The different kinds of minerals shipped are thus divided:—Campanil, or red hæmatite, about 61 per cent. of the total quantity exported; rubio, or brown hæmatite, 32 per cent.; verra dulce, or the purest red hæmatite found in the district, 7 per cent.; a proper mixture of the three giving the best kind of pig iron. The amount of capital invested in the mining localities surrounding the historical slope of Somorostro cannot be far off three millions sterling; and there are five distinct railways from the river to the mines. The Bilbao Iron Ore Company has 21 kilometres of railway, the Orconera Company 14, the Luchana Company 11, the Priano Company 8, and the Société Franco-Belge 7. There are also several wire tramways which foot up, as our cousins say, to about 18 kilometres in length. The industry employs some ten thousand men at work in the mines, and more than fifteen hundred bullock carts. These perhaps dry statistics will convey to the reader some idea of the cause of the busy scene that we have endeavoured to describe that meets the traveller on the Nervion. A very brief account of a visit to the most picturesquely situated of the iron mines will not be out of place here. To the courtesy of the Secretary of the Orconera Mining Company we owe the pleasure of

an afternoon spent in a most instructive manner, and amid the most varied scenery, combining the wildness of Scottish hills, the softness of the vegetation of Mentone, alternated here and there by glimpses of the Bilbao river 800 feet below us, or of the wide sweep of the white crested waves of the Biscayan Sea. Leaving the depôt of the Company referred to at their tips at Luchana in a comfortable open carriage, reserved for the officials of the mine and their friends, the train runs for a short distance through the level maize fields, passing here and there a village church with their universal campaniles, and then commences the zigzag ascent of the abrupt mountains around Somorostro. This railway ride is a panorama of beautiful scenery, and the thirty deep gorges in the hill sides, which are all spanned by substantial bridges, are nothing else but the perfection of valleys clothed to repletion with the varied greens of trees and shrubs of all sorts, the waving wide spreading chestnut being especially prominent. Two-thirds of the way up a steeper gradient is reached, and at a kind of Swindon Junction, on this most beautiful situated line of railway, engines are changed, and passing through several longish tunnels hewn through the solid rock you reach the summit, and leaving the spacious station with its vast collection of ore-trucks you quickly ascend a steep bank and make for where the reports of the dynamite charges show the men are hard at it. The line has been opened fifteen years, and the rails and locomotives (of which there are

fourteen) are of English manufacture; the gauge is that of 2 feet 6 in. and the capital employed in the company is jointly British and German, the most prominent continental stockholder being that king of ironmasters Mr. Krupp of Essen. Over 2,200 men are employed, and these earn from about 1s. 9d. to 4s. a day. The ore is taken by bullock carts from the scene of the actual blasting to the railway trucks, and men find their own carts and teams for eight shillings a day, paid by the company. As often as not the carter with a heavy load of iron-ore is of the fairer sex, but who in physique looks infinitely harder than the mineral she is escorting. Some of these bullock teams will take a load of two or three tons safely down a grade of 1 in 6. The particular name of the terminus of the railway is Galorta; and here the company have a well-conducted hospital, as also the local offices, telegraph station, and the residence of the manager, a fine specimen of the Highland gentleman, who also boasts the very respectable name of Ross. By his kindness we were allowed to wander through rough tunnels cut through beetling cliffs of iron ore, into vast open pits which the hard-working Spanish dynamitards had filled with huge boulders of the sought-for mineral, then ascending a steep bullock track to witness an explosion from a perfectly safe place; see the gigantic masses of red rock tremble, as if in mortal agony, and then bursting forth in a dying throe of despair, join their whilom companions in the cliff only a few short hours before.

All this and much more of it ; we noticed how in some cases the action of the powerful explosive had actually carved out pinnacles and spires and fantastic shapes of iron-ore for its own amusement, and then, having watched the long procession of bullock carts start for Galorta, looked seaward. Over against us on the green mountain side are the famous lines of Somorostro ; 600 feet below us is the bridge where the troops met bayonet to bayonet, and near by is the village church, round which daily desperate fighting went on. To the left of the historical blood-stained battlefield is the agitated bay, and to its right again is the conically-shaped hill called Cerantes. It is a peaceful scene truly as the setting autumnal sun tints the white houses of the hamlets ; but it has other memories for our courteous guide Mr. Ross, who for six long weeks was, as he himself described it, cooped up in his house like a fox, dependent for his food supply on the generosity of either side. He was an eye witness of those artillery duels that pre-faced those sanguinary attacks on the well-defended lines, and from his lofty vantage ground saw the *boina* covered Carlists meet the shock of the *képi'd* Liberals—and the graves filled afterwards.

The Oconcera Company export about one million two hundred thousand tons of ore per annum, yielding about sixty-two per cent. of pig iron, and they look forward to the good times coming, when their output will amount to half as much again.

Naturally enough, the Spaniards are rightfully

taking advantage themselves of the vast stores of mineral wealth, and the big iron works of the Marquis Mudela (whose handsome steam launch is the glory of the Nervion) are busy turning out good material for domestic consumption. Messrs. Ybarra and Company, whose furnaces we have mentioned, do a large trade in the making of wrought iron. Of course it is evident that the heavy duties imposed by Spain on foreign iron and steel help to foster the local iron trade; but should, as all reasonable people hope, these prohibitory duties be largely reduced, the margin left for profit will still be attractive enough to tempt Spanish capitalists to invest their money in this channel.

The reader will understand that this is an evidently commercial chapter; and therefore, though in no way connected with the mineral wealth of the Somorostro, we make no apology for introducing a few remarks on the fact that Bilbao is rapidly becoming a shipping place of importance for Spanish wines, most of the bulk going to Bordeaux, where it is artfully manipulated, and, being put into bottles with pretty French labels on them, comes to England as Château, something or other, of the celebrated vintage of 18—. So little is known in England of the excellence of the wine produced in the central and north western provinces of Spain (for one Briton who has been to the north of Spain, two hundred have visited the cities of the south), that we feel it a positive duty to those

of our countrymen who appreciate a good thing, to give the substance of an article on Spanish wines, which appeared in the excellent "Practical Guide to Bilbao," published in 1882. The author says:—The superior quality of the Spanish wines, particularly those of the central districts, is universally known on account of their flavour, purity, and excellent taste, but the small field for export during recent years has tended to limit the production, and consequently Spanish wines became less known and less appreciated. There was a time when most of the wine went to our American colonies and to England, but its consumption has greatly declined in those countries. Meanwhile the wine industry in France, owing to the special circumstances in which the country is placed, has attained the height of prosperity, the exports having reached a fabulous figure. Unfortunately a large deficit in production has been occasioned there during the last three to four years by the phylloxera; and thus, being unable to meet the demand for her wines, France has had to resort to Spain for supplies, with the view of mixing our wines, which are remarkable by their strong quality and colour, with its own inferior Medoc and Burgundy, &c., and no doubt the former, after careful manipulation, are subsequently exported under the names of the best known Bordeaux brands.

The wine trade in the north of the peninsula has consequently in recent years reached a point which

deserves some consideration, not merely on account of its actual position, but also as regards its future prospects.

The north-eastern provinces—Aragon, Navarra, and Catalonia—are being overrun with enquiries from agents of French wine dealers from Paris and Bordeaux chiefly, and they actually take nearly the whole of the vintage in those districts, which may be roundly stated as about one-third of the whole Spanish vintage. This has a *raison d'être* owing to the deficiency referred to, but should this abnormal state of things cease, that is to say, should the phylloxera disappear from France, what outlet will our wines find if the present French market closes to us?

Now that there is some prospect of Spanish wines being admitted to this country at the shilling duty, it is to be hoped that the British public will soon be able to taste the generous red wine drank at meal times in the peninsula. It is none of your thin acid clarets, which being so much like red ink caused the wit to say he had a craving for blotting paper, but the sort of wine that would warm one on a cold day.

A majority of the people at the table d'hôte mix it well with water, and this is certainly advisable in summer time. On the score of cost it is about that of the worst French claret, the cost of a pipe (115 gallons) being about £11 to £15, free on board at any northern Spanish port. This would enable some enterprising company like that entitled the Bodega

to retail it at a very low cost; and that in time it would be appreciated by the average Briton, who weareth not the blue ribbon of teetotalism, we do not doubt. It is pure, sound, honest juice of the grape, and if our good wine merchants would only let us have it as it is to be had at Spanish hotels and restaurants, they would do a signal service to those who believe with us in the words of Scripture, that wine was made to gladden man's heart. In the province of Biscay, and to a certain extent in that of Santander, a favourite wine of the inhabitants is a wine called *chacoli*, from the Arabic *chacatel*, meaning thereby thinness or weakness. It is thin, and it is not very strong, but it is very palatable, and is decidedly wholesome.

A pleasant footpath walk of about a mile and a half across the hills, starting not far from our friend Mariana Rios' store at El Desierto, will bring the traveller to a perfect specimen of the solidly stone typical Biscayan farm-house, and there, as a rule, he can taste for a nominal fee the real *chacoli* as the yeomen farmers love it. On Sundays in summer time the good folks of Bilbao make up parties to visit this picturesquely situated house, and, drinking the harmless stimulant provided for them, dance or play games till they are all tired out, and then return by tramcar to supper in the *Ciudad invicta*.

And on that proud unvanquished city we must now turn our backs, for that setting sun at Galorta reminded us that the next day would see us setting

out in search of him—over the hills and far away—past Decido where the indefatigable Englishman is at work with his iron ore, past Castro Urdiales, famous for its sardine fishing, and so on till we catch sight of the noble bay of Santander, from which place the road to the mountains of Cantabria is best taken. Yes, our motto was not only *Excelsior*, but also westward still; and what in that pilgrimage of ours, in imitation of the route of the well-known star of empire struck us as of interest, shall be faithfully recorded in the following pages.

CHAPTER VII.

WESTWARD STILL.

A GREAT deal of good-natured kind of haggling enters much into the life of northern Spain, and some little time was more or less pleasantly spent with a livery-stable keeper at Bilbao, before we finally elected to go as far as Castro Urdiales in a chartered carriage with a pair of horses, instead of proceeding by the regular "coach" (much resembling the penny tramway omnibuses in use in London), early on the next morning. At length we struck a fair bargain, but we were not very difficult to please, inasmuch as we had practically determined on availing ourselves of the more luxurious form of travel, provided that it could be obtained with due regard to economy. It was, perhaps, lucky for us that we came to terms, as the coach we should have otherwise gone by came to serious grief, and two of its passengers were badly injured.

The road to Castro on leaving the land of tips—in the coalheaving sense, not vails—near Luchana skirts the hills around Somorostro, and the traveller thus sees from the level the heights he would have

to ascend if he followed our track in visiting the mines of the Orconcera Company. Genial Mr. McVeigh accompanied us on this expedition as far as Castro, which is distant some twenty miles from Bilbao. The details of this particular ride are forthcoming with a good deal of difficulty, and the fault must be emphatically laid at the door of the last-named gentleman. He so managed to sandwich his really valuable information with such an apparently inexhaustible supply of the drollest stories—"yarns" we should call them under the Southern Cross—that one hardly had time to recover either from a split-side burst of laughter or from the mental effort his statistics and facts involved. It was sheer physical and mental hard labour that ride to Castro, and the warder in charge of the party would make us laugh and would make us think. Good humour, they say, is a marvellous digestive, and though the discipline of good Mr. McVeigh was remarkably severe in every way, it enabled us very soon to forget a very substantial early breakfast, and do ample justice to a good dinner later on. But this is what is called "anticipating," a practice which, whether as regards salaries or book-writing, is much to be deprecated.

The road was a good one, the weather was bright and warm, the horses went on at a steady pace worthy of Spanish gravity, the company was as just described, and if we did not enjoy ourselves we ought to have done. A light northern breeze came

from over the bay, of which we had successive glimpses all the way. At one time we were ascending a steep road, at others passing through pleasant green valleys; at times the road was perfectly zigzag up the side of an iron-bound spur of the Cantabrian Hills, and on the left was a high precipice of dark brown rock with the roar of the Atlantic waves beating at its feet. To use an expressive colonialism, we were not "new chums" at scenery; but it must be distinctly put on record that one of the finest coasting drives or walks that can be found in any part of Western Europe is that from the vicinity of Bilbao to the quaint little town of Castro Urdiales. The villages we passed through were not of the most interesting order—few Spanish villages proper are. The houses are clean and fairly comfortable within, but they look woefully desolate outside. Even the old houses of the well-to-do gentry have an almost forbidding look about them, which even the arms and crest of the owner elaborately carved in a conspicuous place does not relieve. The late Mr. William Pitt knew how to tax anything and everything, but if he could visit modern Spain he would learn a lesson or two. For instance, all signboards are taxed, so even the village inn is indistinguishable from the neighbouring cottages, except by the hanging out of a fair-sized vine-bush; hence we suppose the old saying, that good wine needs no bush to indicate to the experienced where it may be found. The tax-gatherer also has his

grasping hand on all advertisements ; so the walls in Britain so plentifully covered with notices of farm and cattle sales, or with that great juvenile joy—"The circus is coming"—exist in all their bareness in the kingdom of Alfonso. The *Estancos Nacionales*, or places for the sale of stamps and tobacco, are very plentiful, but you cannot get stamps at the post-office. Having written your letter, you must first find out where the stamps can be got, and then where to post it. This is a convenient system, and saves a lot of time and worry, as in nine cases out of ten the *Estanco Nacional* is just the other end of the village from where the post-office is. At the latter place, in the little window, or as often as not affixed to a wooden board inside the house, is a list of letters that have arrived for the people round about. But the post-office does not count for much in the Cantabrian region of Spain. Its inhabitants are not a correspondent-ridden people like we are, and would, we fear, at first even fail to see the obvious advantages of putting something to your left ear and speaking to the wall, saying at intervals—"Hallo, is that you !"

Of Spanish tobacco it must be said that, being a strict government monopoly, it might be infinitely worse. With us in the mountains, it was of course Hobson's choice, and of necessity we had to put up with it ; but at times, when a slight breeze blew the dried hay-like stuff out of our pipes, we certainly did long for the flesh pots of Richmond Gem

smoking mixture, or some equally first-class brand. As to the cigarettes, of which one can get one hundred for the low price of one real ($2\frac{1}{2}d.$), they are not so objectionable as mere whiffs, but unless deftly handled in true Spanish fashion, they have an inconvenient habit of falling to pieces. One of the most astounding proofs of the great patience of the Spanish people is to be found in their toleration of the boxes of vestas which the Government sell at the aforesaid *Estancos Nacionales*. They are the most ingenious contrivances for losing matches, and getting them so to speak all over the place, that ever the wit of man devised. The paper cover of the box is long, the brown paper box inside is short, with a kind of flap to it that breaks off fifteen minutes or less after it is in your possession. Whichever way you open these boxes the vestas stream out; and it is a perfect marvel that so few serious accidents happen from this most reprehensible fashion of the authorities in playing with fire. On one occasion, when standing near a grate, one of us found he had been unconsciously taking an impression of his bunch of keys in the wax of a quantity of loose vestas which naturally enough had come adrift from their useless box. This is a regular British grumble and a true one. Our good friends the Spaniards complain among themselves, but do nothing. They bear their match-tax a great deal better than our people did when Lord Sherbrooke attempted to get some *luce ex lucellum*. One of the prettiest of the many pretty places we came across

in the panorama of coast scenery on the way to Castro is the village of Onton, which is situated to the left of a charming mountain stream, and which here divides the provinces of Biscay and Santander. The bay which forms the mouth of this river forms a perfect little port which deserves the best skill of an artist to depict. A small pier runs out into the sea, and large vessels occasionally load iron ore here. Sheltered very much by the surrounding hills, it possesses a very equable climate, and so mild is the average temperature, that the vine flourishes immediately above the town, and a great deal of chacoli is made in the neighbourhood. So great are the attractions of Onton as a place of residence, that an English marine surveyor who had occasion to visit the tiny port on business, has purchased an estate there, and resides at Onton during many months of the year. From this little gem of white houses set in a semi-circular belt of emerald green, the road is more and more interesting, by means of the diversified sea and landscapes, till another exquisite bay, but of much larger proportions, that of Castro Urdiales, comes in sight from a lofty hill commanding a full view of the town, pier, castle, church and lighthouse, and from which a very steep descent has to be made to Castro proper, lying as it does on the sea beach of the bay itself.

In Spain they drive horses very slowly down a hill and very fast up one, so in our leisurely descent we could easily take in the full scene before us. As

Mr. Ford says very truly :—" This pretty port with its bay, headland rocks, castle, and hermitage of Santa Ana, was made for the artist." Arrived on the level in the centre of the town, which has a population of about 8000, one sees on the left a bold, rocky headland, on which are the exceedingly picturesque ivy-covered ruins of one of those tall massive square Moorish castles which meet the eye now and again till the Asturian Highlands proper are reached, and there, as we know, the Moslem never had sway. Under shelter of this headland, which reminds one, in a fashion, of that at Scarborough, a small but strongly built stone pier runs out for some little distance, and a busy scene is presented, as Castro is a very important centre of the sardine fishery—the take that morning had been fairly successful, for numerous craft were landing their spoils from the sea, while out in the Bay itself we counted from the stone embankment that faces the harbour itself no less than 161 sardine boats all at work. The fish market proper at Castro is interesting, but it only exists, as far as we could make out, for local demand, all the sardines being either salted in barrels or sent away to be packed with oil in the universally known flat tins. A first-class hotel, entitled the *Fonda El Siglo*, is in the centre of the town, and commands from its upper windows remarkably good views, as is needless to be said. It is close to the public gardens, which are tastefully laid out, and the fare supplied by Mr. Alexander Josse is

well cooked, plentiful, and moderate in price. In the bathing season Castro is very popular as a place of resort, so the *fonda* is a large one for Northern Spain, and there is plenty of sleeping accommodation, all in the most perfect order. One has only to stroll along the older part of the town and notice the strong stone houses all bearing lordly coats of arms, but now doing duty for very indifferent stores, to find out that Castro has had a great history, though, except perhaps in the matter of sardines, its glory has departed. It is a stately relic of the glories of ancient days in Basqueland, and it is likely enough that from the grey shadow of that souvenir of Moslem rule, the ruined castle, the first European fisherman went away Northward Ho! for a whale hunt—because it is, we believe, admitted on all hands that the first to inaugurate that branch of marine industry were the hardy boatmen of the Cantabrian coast. First visiting the church by means of a no means well-paved stone road and fairly steep, we again came in with our old friend the “restorer,” and again denounced him and all his works. We are inclined to the opinion that the same gentleman who destroyed the beauty of the church of St. Anton at Bilbao afterwards bent his wicked way to Castro Urdiales, there to accomplish the same fell deed—how well he succeeded let the English tourists (and we hope there will be many who will be tempted to go and enjoy Northern Spain like we have) go and judge for themselves. We forbear to go into details, but the

reader may remember the old stove pipes that used to beautify churches in the days of high pews and three deckers. At Castro the church is decorated with monstrous stone supports, very much like the pipes, and out of all keeping with the rest of the building. Beyond the church, at the jutting of the headland with the sea, is a lighthouse, and from its lofty tower the whole situation can be pleasantly surveyed, and if the traveller is not satisfied, he must indeed be hard to please. Close by is the hermitage of Santa Ana, a separated rock on which once lived a saint of that name; the chasm that divides it from the headland has now been bridged over and in part blocked up by solid masonry; and here in stormy weather the wild Atlantic waves beat with all their fury. The site of the old residence of the hermit now forms a pleasant nook, of course of limited dimensions, but the authorities have thoughtfully provided shelters and seats, and we can imagine no pleasanter place than this hermitage at Castro for an idle man to pass a quiet reflective morning, especially in the spring or summer. The high green mountains on the east side of the bay will face him, and between themselves and his retired spot will be the fishing fleet; the bustling little town will be on his right, while at his feet and all round him, save for the narrow bridge which binds him to the mainland of Spain, he will find the sea, the murmur of whose ceaseless wash might, if he so wished it, send him soothingly to sleep. Many years ago the talented

editor of *Punch*, Mr. F. C. Burnand, was, so he tells us in one of his humorous works, sent as a kind of travelling inspector by a company started in London to find a really quiet watering-place, but the "effort was in vain." If the society which employed him is still in existence, we would strongly recommend them to send some competent individual to report on Castro Urdiales, which boasts a superb bathing-place to its other charms. Two pounds a week (wine and everything included), or even less, would be about the figure at the El Siglo, and when our readers find out how easily they can reach Northern Spain—and we shall tell them by-and-by—we shall be much surprised if Mr. Josse, or some clear-sighted competitor of his, will not require to obtain a staff of English speaking waiters for this *beau idéal* of a place for a real holiday or residence for those who have small fixed incomes.

Castro is still a walled town, and its defences are pierced for musketry, but half a battery of field pieces would soon make them useless. As we have said, the importance of Castro lies in the past, and there are many soul-stirring stories in connection with brave but ineffectual attempts of the Gothic Spaniards to storm the Moorish Castle; the difficulties attending which can best be judged by surveying its precipitous walls with their frowning apertures for arrow shooting. There is an unexceptionable café at Castro, with some good billiard tables kept by a Frenchman, who, strange to say, seems to get on well enough in

the land of his adoption. As a rule, however, the suspicion and dislike of the foreigner, so common to all Spaniards, is, in the northern provinces of Spain, concentrated on the devoted heads of the French. In the Cantabrian provinces, as a rule, they look down on and despise the southern Spaniard as effeminate, weak and gushing, but they positively hate the French.

Our coach for Santander not starting till an early hour in the morning, we elected to drive back a short distance with our friend, who was returning to Bilbao in the carriage referred to, and then in the course of a starlit autumn evening walk back again to Castro. During this five-mile ride we learnt from the eloquent lips of Mr. McVeigh that a romance of modern days clings to the historical town of Castro Urdiales.

Of course, in the short time we had, we could only manage to get at some of the facts; but if, as they are alleged, not one of Miss Braddon's or Wilkie Collins's novels will approach in interest the records of the adventures, political, social, and otherwise, of Clara of Castro—a leading feminine intriguer, as far as we understood, on the part of the Carlist party, in the north of Spain. “Too strange not to be true,” is a good motto for all things out of the way in the peninsula, and the story of Clara is one of them. As we understand, however, that at no distant date it will be given to the English public with the striking title of “The Vacant Throne,” it would be manifestly

unfair to refer further to the history of a heroine who has immortalised Castro in her chequered life.

Saying farewell to Clara's historian at the top of the steep hill, from which one gets the first view of Castro Bay, we looked westward, and the scene by the gloom of early evening was perhaps more beautiful than in the sunlight of midday. On either side of us were dark forests of trees, through which the moonlight tried to make way and failed. Before us was the bay itself, shining like burnished silver in the moon's rays; above us was a cloudless sky lighted by thousands of stars. Looking as far as we could see, on our left were the faint gas-lights of Castro, which looked faint indeed, compared with the sea-reflected moonlight, and on our right was the revolving red lamp of the lighthouse, which is plainly visible at a distance of seven miles. We knew that the Decido mines were somewhere near, and, as we wanted to see what progress this new and rising Spanish port was making, we fell in with an intelligent native, who, strange to say, though living close by, actually knew where Decido was, and, taking his advice, we made for a short cut and left the main road, which, like all others in Northern Spain, was a perfect model of a highway, and a pattern to many of the so-called post-roads in England. It was good athletic exercise that descent by the short cut; jumping from boulder to boulder, and occasionally cannoning shoulder to shoulder, made it lively work. Large round stones,

remarkably unsteady and deep holes between them, made the track, but we got down to sea-level at last and made for the village inn. With two large *copas*, or tumblers, of good red wine before us we were resting our aching limbs, when one of us noticed some one in the dimly-lighted bar-room of a thoroughly colonial type, reading the *Standard* newspaper. Knowing at once he must be English, we were soon in conversation, and found out that he was one of the engineers of the Decido Iron Mining Company, whose enterprise has simply made Decido, which a few years ago hardly had a name. Here John Bull has erected a pier 736 feet long, with a head 50 feet wide and 242 feet in length, and along this pier vessels drawing eighteen feet of water can always be afloat. The iron ore is transported by trucks from the mines to the centre of the pier, the full waggons drawing up the empty ones, and the whole work reflects the highest credit on Mr. G. Wells of Westminster, the engineer-in-chief of the Decido Iron Company. About 200,000 tons of iron ore are exported annually, and the out-turn is about 53 per cent. of good pig. In the mines, Mr. Austin (the *Standard* reader) told us they were constantly finding Roman and Moorish relics and tools perfectly oxidised—the wooden haft of a pick-axe, pit lamps, navicular wooden frames—and had all become iron ore. After having inspected the pier and other works which were visible by the moonlight, we had more conversation with Mr. Austin, and it was before all

things characteristically British. The three of us had been to every part of the world. Seated on some empty barrels and looking on the peaceful sea we yarned of travels in strange lands in the matter-of-fact fashion which astonishes and confounds the average continental. "When was he last at Baku?" "Then, of course, he knew Allender?" "Well, that is strange." "He was in Samoa with me in '77." "I remember him well at Zanzibar, though," and so on and so on. The travellers for the great commercial house of Messrs. John Bull & Company are pushing, enterprising gentlemen, and they seldom reckon mileage and are never homesick.

A night in a Spanish coach—it holds eight inside, and is omnibus-shaped—is one of those luxuries that we confess we would dispense with. The roads are good, but the springs are bad. If you open the window, you will be almost certain to catch cold; if it is up, the atmosphere is awful. However, as smoking is allowed, the votary of the weed makes an atmosphere of his own, as it were, and if tired with exercise, laughing, and sight-seeing, he will soon go to sleep. As the drowsy god had us very fairly in his grasp on the particular morning about which we write, all that we can say about the journey could be summed up in very few words in Mark Twain's diary fashion: "Got into coach; went to sleep. Woke up at Santander." Concise but uninteresting. Having, however, travelled and retravelled that road many times since, we can tell our readers what is to be

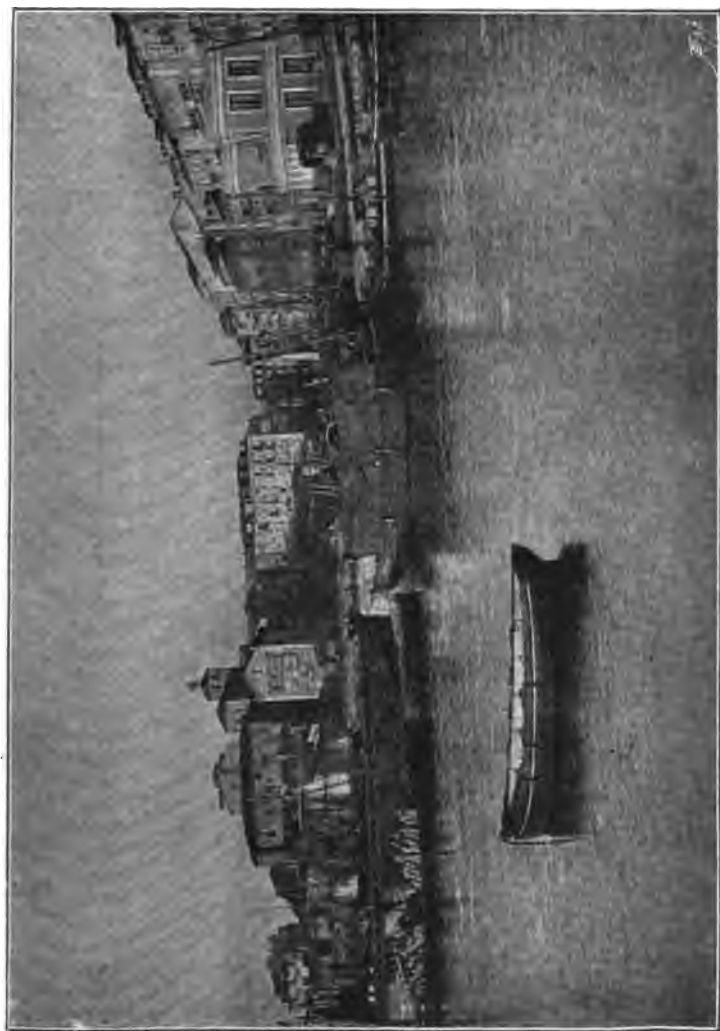
seen, and what we did not see the last time we risked our limbs with His Majesty's Mails from Castro to Santander. About five miles from the scene of "Clara's" home is the picturesque little port of Oriñon, placed at the mouth of the river of the same name, which is here crossed by a large punt, on which the loaded coach is placed—this is worked by chains; but on one occasion, and not so long ago, the chains gave way, and the coach, mails, passengers and all were quietly floating out to sea, and were only rescued from their perilous position after great difficulty. When a governor of the province has been drowned at that ferry, they will put a bridge there, but not before.

Where every place is of interest praise gets monotonous; but it must be admitted that the situation of Santoña is unrivalled in the peninsula, with perhaps the single exception of Gibraltar. Lying, as it does, at the foot of an isolated mountain, and facing the centre of a bay which could receive a very large fleet of ironclads, and which is so land-locked that it is always calm inside, however hard the westerly gale may be blowing outside, the place is a natural fortress, and its importance was easily recognised by the first Napoleon. When that great leader and destroyer of men gave the kingdom of Spain to his brother, he made a reservation for himself of the town of Santoña, which, to use his own expression in a little-known despatch, he wished to make the Gibraltar of the North.

The church in this town is interesting enough, especially for its tombs—which are very numerous and handsome—and also for a miraculous image of the Virgin which came from Antioch. The first pilot which Columbus employed was a native of Santoña, and a quarter of the town is called the Barrio de la Cossa, after the name of the historical mariner referred to.

A large prison establishment is maintained at Santoña, and affords accommodation for not less than 700 convicts; as we shall have occasion to refer later on to other Spanish gaols, it is not necessary here to refer at any length to the convict dépôt of Santoña; but a word is due to the marvellous proficiency the prisoners have acquired in the art of covering bottles and the like with coloured straws, and in the manufacture out of similar material of card and cigar cases.

The Bilbao coach *viâ* Castro is in no particular hurry; the stoppages are frequent and long, so it is always early in the forenoon, if one takes the conveyance leaving Castro about one A.M., that you find yourself in the pleasant suburbs of Santander, anxious to get out for a wash and breakfast, and desirous maybe of finding what there is of instruction, interest or amusement in the capital of the province, which gives the place its name, and which we have called a Cantabrian city.



A NOOK IN SANTANDER.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CANTABRIAN CITY.

It is true, in a sense, that Santander is a Cantabrian city, but to look at its long line of tall very French built houses along the quay or *muelle*, one would feel inclined to the opinion that it is hardly Spanish at all, much less Cantabrian, in the purely local sense of the word. However, its central position between the western and eastern ports of Bilbao and Gijon, its commerce—which if just now a little stagnant is still considerable—and its place as capital of the province, all point out Santander as a representative town, well worthy of attention.

To the student of history this Cantabrian city has many attractions, for it was the *Portus Blendium* of the Romans, and its large and secure bay, with its anchorage and shelter, have from time to time been the rendezvous of fleets and vessels famous in the annals of Europe. In 1248, for instance, the ships of Ferdinand left Santander to blockade Seville; in 1522 King Charles V. landed here on the 16th July to take possession of Spain, and 101 years later our own Charles I. embarked for Portsmouth after his

romantic visit to Madrid. Soult cruelly sacked the place in 1808, and in 1834 it was the scene of the landing of the brave British legion under Sir De. Lacy Evans, when, owing to the proverbial Spanish suspicion of the foreigner, they were treated so badly; and comparatively only a few years ago, in 1868, it was the scene of a sanguinary engagement between the troops of Queen Isabella and the revolutionary forces.

To-day Santander has all the appearance of its former importance; but if the truth must be told, its prosperity is on the wane. The long and handsome *muelle* with its stately five-storied houses is imposing enough, and the arrival of the huge transatlantic liners from Liverpool and Bordeaux, calling at the well-known bay outward bound for Havana and Mexican ports, give a kind of life to the place, but it is not the old vigorous commercial life which once distinguished the famous city, *muy noble y siempre leal y decidida*, when her wharves were full of barrels of fish and flour for Cuba, or cotton and tobacco sent in return. The commerce on the banks of the Nervion river has the "go" of the nineteenth century about it; that of Santander seems to affect it because *it is* Santander and no where else. The population of the place is over 40,000, and in the gay sunshine of a Spanish spring, summer or autumn, it is pleasant enough to stroll along the quay and see the crowds of Asturian emigrants, with their scanty baggage, make for the tender which is to take them to the

ocean liner, waiting just below the town ready and willing to transport them to "America," as the Spaniards call Cuba, in search either of a speedy fortune or an early grave. The spirit of colonisation is still in active force among the sturdy highlanders of Cantabria; they, at least, have not lost that impulse of self-development which has made Britain the Power she is to-day; and even if the humble Asturian peasant with his bundle only seeks better times in the narrow limits of the still Spanish-ruled Cuba, he at least commands the sympathy and good wishes of those whose proud boast it is that they are sons and daughters of that mother of nations—Imperial England.

Our quarters at Santander have always been the *Fonda Europa*, kept by an estimable Frenchman whose politeness is as good as his fare, and his tariff very moderate (the terms, inclusive, being eight pesetas a day). We mention this hotel for the reason stated; but there are others equally good, and perhaps, better in Santander, such as the *Grand* and *Dos Amigos*, but we can only testify of that which we know. The Café Suizo on the *muelle* is an elaborate institution decorated in the most barbarous taste as far as colouring is concerned, but the average Briton will be rewarded by paying it a visit, by the sight of the *Daily Telegraph*, which is always to be found on its tables, and arrives daily.

In the "unconquered city" of Bilbao, not far from the Plaza Nueva, there is a passage which has the

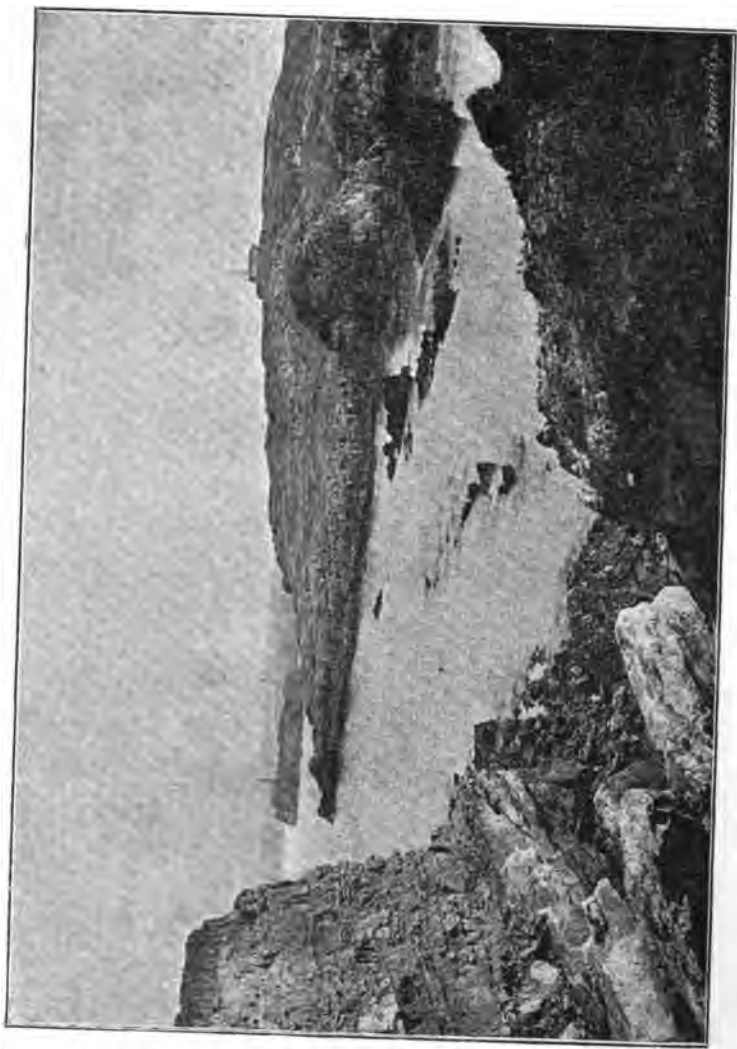
reputation in summer time of exhaling anything but the odours of Araby the blest, to say nothing of such a scent factory as that of Messrs. Gosnell: but in Santander they boast of a corner which should be held famous in any dictionary of the location of bad smells. When the tide is out the black sewage runs under the quay and centres in the harbour mud, and the traveller who can endure more than a whiff of this atmospheric poison, must be strong indeed. The sanitary arrangements of Santander are so disgracefully imperfect, and so much want immediate attention, that the aforesaid is written more in sorrow than in anger, with the avowed hope that the local authorities will see their way to their at once looking after that ceaseless worry of modern civilization—the drains. We could not be angry even if we would. Here in London we have a noble tidal river and we simply choke it with unmentionable filth, a few miles after the long-suffering stream has passed the province of houses we call the metropolis. In Santander, in so-called benighted Spain, they have a noble bay and they do exactly the same thing on an infinitely smaller scale. When the sewage of London ceases to pollute the mouth of Barking Creek and Crossness, and is beginning to make useful the sands about Foulness island (a most appropriate name by the way, as if it was made for the business), we can afford to lecture the good people of Santander, but not till then. Meantime His Excellency the Mayor of the city referred to should do his best to

make an end at once, and for ever, of that "smelly corner" on the beautiful *muelle* that is under his jurisdiction.

Looking from the quay itself the eyes rest on the green spurs of Cantabrian hills, and now and again the snow-capped tops of the higher mountains can be seen glistening in the sun. Hills, in fact, surround the town on all sides, and the city is practically divided into two towns, one being the upper and the other the lower; the latter being the more modern. Being, as we have said, the capital of the province, there are numerous public buildings, some of which are worthy of notice, but naturally the most important is the ancient cathedral, which stands on a sort of rocky promontory of the quayside, and which in effect divides the new *muelle*, which extends for nearly three miles from the old one, to which the rails of the Northern Railway have free access. The cathedral is a pure Gothic edifice, with three naves, and at its high altar are the precious relics of St. Emetrius and St. Caledonio, patrons of the city, which was made the seat of a bishopric suffragan to the archiepiscopal see of Burgos in 1174. The beautiful holy-water stoup of massive marble is a feature of this interesting church, and so is the inscription in Arabic lettering that surrounds it. Beneath the main floor of the church proper is the vast crypt, where mass is said at stated hours on Sundays and other days. The *prie-dieu* chairs, so common in French and other continental churches,

are not seen in Northern Spain ; when not reverently kneeling the congregation stand. But, as a rule, except at the two gospels and the *Credo*, the devout female sex remain kneeling from the *Introibo ad altare Dei* to the *Deo gratias*, which follows the last line of the first chapter of St. John. However, for the aged and infirm, there are in most churches two or more benches set choir-wise, and here those who cannot well stand or kneel sit during all but the most important part of the function at the altar. On Sundays, at most of the low masses after that of 7.30 A.M., a sermonette is given of about ten to fifteen minutes' duration, and at the conclusion of the mass—not in the middle, as with us—the Epistle and Gospel of the Day are read in the vernacular. As in old times in England, the Litany of the Saints is frequently said, not only before high mass is sung, but also before well-attended low masses, such as those at the hours of 8.30, 9 or 10 on a Sunday morning. We have not the least intention of entering into any question of religious controversy, but justice must be done. The people of northern Spain are, as a rule, devotedly and loyally Catholic, or they are freethinkers of a most advanced type ; but generally the Spaniard dies a Catholic, whether or not he may have been faithful to the ordinances of his Church during his active life.

In every Spanish town the public fountain is, of course, one of the most prominent institutions of the municipal life, and this is especially the case at



SARDINERO, NEAR SANTANDER.

Santander ; and it is well worth the stranger's while to follow the example of the gentleman who went to the "Blue Alsatian Mountains," and when at Santander to "wander near the fountains, just to hear the maidens sing." They sing very well do some of these Cantabrian water-carriers, and the consummate ease with which they carry on their heads large buckets full of water is not the least striking feature of the busy scene of some three or four hundred gaily-dressed women, every one with a bucket, all good-humouredly striving as to who should be first in getting the evening's water supply. Occasionally there is a little bit of a squabble, but it is all over in a very short time ; the Cantabrian people are easy-going and very patient, and family jars over family pitchers are few and far between.

Santander boasts a theatre which will hold about a thousand people, and the bull-ring has accommodation for, at least, 8000 spectators. There are very many pleasant walks and drives around Santander, notably *l'Alameda Segunda*, on the Bilbao road, but the favourite drive of the town is certainly that to Sardinero, which is on the open bay, and about three miles from the *muelle*. A tramway takes one down to the pleasant bathing-place of the Santander people for a few pence in a very short time, and *en route* you pass through the fashionable faubourg of Miranda, from the handsome houses of which suburb splendid views of the bay, the ocean, and the moorlands can be had. Sardinero in summer time often

has as many visitors as five or six thousand persons stopping there, but in the autumn and winter it is quite deserted, the warmth-loving Spaniards having very little affection for the sea-side when it is more than likely that stormy winds may blow. The best bathing-place at Sardinero is that called La Magdalena, to which is attached an excellent hotel. In the summer season the prices "go up" at Sardinero, as they do in other watering-places nearer home; but in October and November, usually delightful months in northern Spain, one could live at La Magdalena for a trifling sum per week; as it is, in summer the inclusive charges for bed, board, wine, and attendance, if the meals are taken at the table, is only 7s. 6d. a day. The gardens of the lodging-houses or *casas de huéspedes* are prettily laid out; vegetation of a most luxuriant order is abundant, and a very pleasant-looking watering-place indeed is the local Brighton of the good people of Santander. The sands are firm, and afford excellent walking, while the geologist will roam from rock to rock, which he will find to contain fossils of all sorts. The perfect fossil of a mastodon was discovered at Sardinero in the summer of last year, but some would-be improver has destroyed a portion of the relic. Facing the place is the rocky islet of Mouro, on which a lighthouse now stands. Its cliffs are very precipitous from the sea, and even now, with its steps for the lighthouse keeper, it looks a very unapproachable place indeed. However, that difficulty did not

prevent its utilisation by British tars, and at any rate for a short time the Union Jack of Britain has waved over that isolated rock.

The French having sacked Santander in 1808, occupied Sardinero in force, and a portion of the Channel fleet was detached to make that occupation as unpleasant for them as possible. Accordingly one morning a British squadron appeared off the harbour of Santander, and, to the Frenchmen's delight and astonishment, put to sea again; but the joy was turned into sorrow the next day when it was found that under cover of night the fleet had returned, and by marvellous pluck and skill had actually mounted a battery of guns on Mouro Island; and the sentries of Marshal Soult's force were not believed by their superior officers when they said that the daring English were actually occupying Mouro; but the noise of the British cannon soon convinced them. The French had no means of dislodging the brave British detachment, who eventually broke up the occupation of Sardinero, and were relieved when Soult's forces had retired in much the same fashion as they got there. The British occupation of Mouro lasted very nearly three weeks.

The Santander people never seem to have forgotten or forgiven the cruel way in which the French looted their town, and an Englishman who can make himself understood in Spanish or who understands it will hear many bitter things said of what Mr. Max O'Rell would call our "dear neighbours" across the silver

streak. Although the Spaniards have at times behaved very coldly and ungratefully to the British who did and suffered so much on their account, yet in their hearts they have never forgotten, nor will they ever forget, that it was mainly due to British generalship that the best Marshals of France were driven out of Spain, and that it was by means of British war ships that the pictures which the French had stolen from the churches, were restored to their places. Some months after the crushing defeat of Vittoria, when such an enormous amount of plunder fell into Wellington's hands, a British squadron appeared off Santander, and his Excellency the Mayor was duly informed that the object of His Britannic Majesty's war vessels was to restore to one of the churches some pictures which the French had robbed them of. Some blue jackets and marines were landed, and with stately ceremonial on the part of the British and Spanish authorities, both ecclesiastical and civil, the British won plunder was restored to its rightful owners. In the old times of the bitter war against the French invaders, children, when asked to say the Creed, used to commence with "Damnation to the French—I believe, &c." And it is no exaggeration to say that the same feeling lingers yet, and in no part of Northern Spain does it exist stronger than it does in the sacked city of Santander. We were gratuitously told in a shipping office that being Englishmen we could easily be accommodated, "had we been Frenchmen it would have been a totally different matter. There were too

many of them prowling about with their endless sham politeness," and so on and much more to the same effect. The northern Spaniard has the most undisguised contempt for what he considers the frivolous character of the French, and if you are at all in his confidence he will soon tell you so.

All the environs of Santander are remarkably pretty, and they are studded with handsome villas surrounded by orchards and gardens in which the orange and the citron trees grow luxuriantly. The view from the hill-side walks above the old town (which at one time was walled, but of which no vestige remains) with their panorama of the bay, is well worth the ascent, and those who are interested should visit the large government tobacco factory where over 1000 hands are employed. Anyway, these are the salient features of this most interesting Cantabrian city, which we must leave for the road to the Highlands.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ROAD TO THE HIGHLANDS.

FROM Santander to the Cantabrian Highlands proper there are two distinct routes, one being by way of Santillana, the birth place of Gil Blas, and the other a more direct way by taking the train to Torrelavega, and thence one of the two rival coaches to the bridge of Unquera at the back of the exquisite little port of Tina Mayor. In Spanish railroad travel one has the advantage of not being perplexed by the number of routes, and the *pros* and *cons* of each. If one wishes, say, to go from London to Edinburgh, he can avail of three lines of direct rail; while if the stranger wishes to see the Fen country, and the tower of Lincoln Cathedral, he can go now by the fast expresses of the Great Eastern, and arrive at Auld Reekie only an hour or so later for his oriental detour. They manage these things very differently in Spain. There are three trains to Torrelavega in the day, two being "mixed" ones, *i.e.* carrying passengers and freight, the other being the mail train. As this mail train does not connect with the Unquera coaches we had to leave Santander at about 7.15 in the morning (that

was the official time, but the train was late), and once having started, proceeded in an exceedingly dignified, not to say supernaturally slow pace till we were fairly out of the suburbs of Santander; and there, having got a fair way on, so to speak, had to pull in a frightened sort of fashion at the little station of Boó, near which are some royal dockyards, where, as Murray sarcastically remarks, ships of any size *can* be built, but never are. The view from this station of Boó is a remarkably fine one. Beyond the marshes through which the train runs are large patches of land, in a more or less reclaimed condition; and beyond is the noble bay itself, dotted on the occasion of our last visit with numberless steamers, nearly all flying the red ensign of Britain, doing their penance of quarantine. Rising immediately behind these representatives of the mercantile marine are the precipitous mountains of the Eastern Cantabrian range—a remarkable sugar-loaf hill, rather smaller than the others, being a most conspicuous object. Not far from Boó are some famous saline waters, at a place known as Solares, and these are highly recommended for gastric complaints of all kinds. After waiting quite a considerable time to see if no one else was really going to turn up, our engine (a very old-fashioned style of English build, and it has the date 1859) plucked up its courage, and, through a very pretty undulating wooded country, took us at a fair pace to Renedo, distant thirteen miles from Santander, which station we

reached about two hours after leaving the latter named city, so the pace was slow if sure. At Renedo the up-train has to wait for the down; the latter being somewhat late, we had a leisurely stay of quite half an hour, and as nearly everybody got out, we had plenty of opportunity to study the train and our fellow-passengers. The carriages, it must be said, were much better than the engine, and looked thoroughly up to any reasonable work demanded of them. Some of them are of French, and others English manufacture; the second class is good enough for all practical purposes, and as all railway fares in Spain are very dear, we should strongly advise the average reader never to think of compounding extortion by going first; unless, indeed, he has a free pass, in which case the extortion of his less lucky fellow-travellers will be a matter of no moment. There is little to be said about our passengers by that most dilatory of trains, on that bright autumnal morning. A few peasant women in loud dresses, some effective looking ladies in black, with mantillas and good ornaments, a couple of the Civil Guard—who looked as if they had just come out of a band-box—in their rather Opéra Bouffe uniform; and a sprinkling of workmen and commercial travellers formed the patient crowd, who without an expression of surprise awaited the arrival of the Madrid train, so as to enable them to get on to Torrelavega. We say it in no unfriendly carping spirit, but our good friends the Spaniards seem to do everything, in

matters connected with railway management, the wrong way up, so to speak. For instance the 7.15 train from Santander proceeds no further than Torrelavega, the road being a single one ; why, in the name of common sense, does not it pass the Madrid train at that rather important *depôt*, instead of at Renedo, where few people want to get in, and except for refreshment purposes, or stretching their legs, no one wants to get out. This was the question which "bothered us intirely," as they say across the Channel of St. George, but of Spanish travelling anomalies there is literally no end.

The town of Torrelavega, with its population of three or four thousand people, is about a thirty minutes' good walk from the station, and as the road is remarkably uninteresting it is best to avail of the railway omnibus, which lands you in the heart of the town for half a peseta, or fivepence. There are a good number of well-built modern houses in Torrelavega, which look as if they were the outcome of money acquired in Cuba, or the Philippines, but it certainly is not a place at which we can confidently advise the traveller to stop and ponder. If he is our way of thinking he will be glad to get out of it, for there is little to interest any one in it. However, the first time we visited this coach-starting place for the Highlands and the Asturias, we looked forward to making the acquaintance of Torrelavega with a great deal of pleasure, as we were gravely informed at the Muelle at Santander that Señor Tetis, the

proprietor of one of the coach lines to Unquera, was not only a very pleasant gentleman but spoke English remarkably well. This was splendid; he would put us on the right track, give us all the straight tips, place us on the best terms with his coachmen and guards, indicate the best *posadas* to go to—the ones to avoid, &c., &c. This was the baseless fabric of a vision while sunning ourselves at the fence at Renedo station. We arrived at Torrelavega. In accents trembling with broken Spanish we inquired for the office of Señor Tetis—we found it; and the Señor himself, a well-built, handsome man, with a smiling countenance and a jet-black beard, advanced towards us. Raising our hats in a way which we considered to be truly Spanish, and exceedingly graceful, we remarked, or rather one of us did, in a cheery tone of voice—"Good morning, Señor, we are going by one of *your* coaches, you know; we are so pleased to find some one who can speak English. If there is time perhaps you could come and have breakfast with us. This is my friend from ——"

Señor Tetis smiled, and then added, "Plenty o' watter."

This, if he referred to the Atlantic or even the Bay of Santander, was immortal truth itself, but in our circumstances it was hardly to the point, as it were; in fact one of us thought it irrelevant altogether. And once again we spoke of travels, coaches, horses, hours of departure *et hoc genus*

omne to Señor Tetis, who this time burst into a hearty laugh and said in Spanish he knew *that* bit of English; and that, alas, was the extent of his vocabulary. This was some year or so ago; and as during this intervening time he has only learned the single word "yes," our friend Señor Tetis is not apparently destined to startle the world as a Spanish Mezzofanti. When the Señor now spots an Englishman he always brings in this "plenty o' watter, yes," and if the Briton does not enjoy the joke, he does.

Many of our readers must know the little penny omnibuses which ply between Cannon Street and Liverpool Street Stations in the City, and the Unquera coach was a very poor imitation of one of these in some respects, but it was very different in others. A sort of canopy or shelter went over the driver's seat. It boasted four horses, instead of the London one (we say nothing as to quality, we give the numbers); ancient was the paint and infirm were the springs of the Spanish Royal Mail. As the odour of not even clean straw and governmental cigarettes was slightly over noticeable in the inside, we soon made arrangements with our good friend "Plenty o' watter, yes," to get us the two seats to the left of the driver, and away we went. The last-named individual had a keen sense of the humours of the road and also for the wineshops, which, if he could possibly help it, he never passed. When he was not telling a comic story, or singing some snatch of a song evidently got from some Madrid music-hall—for the

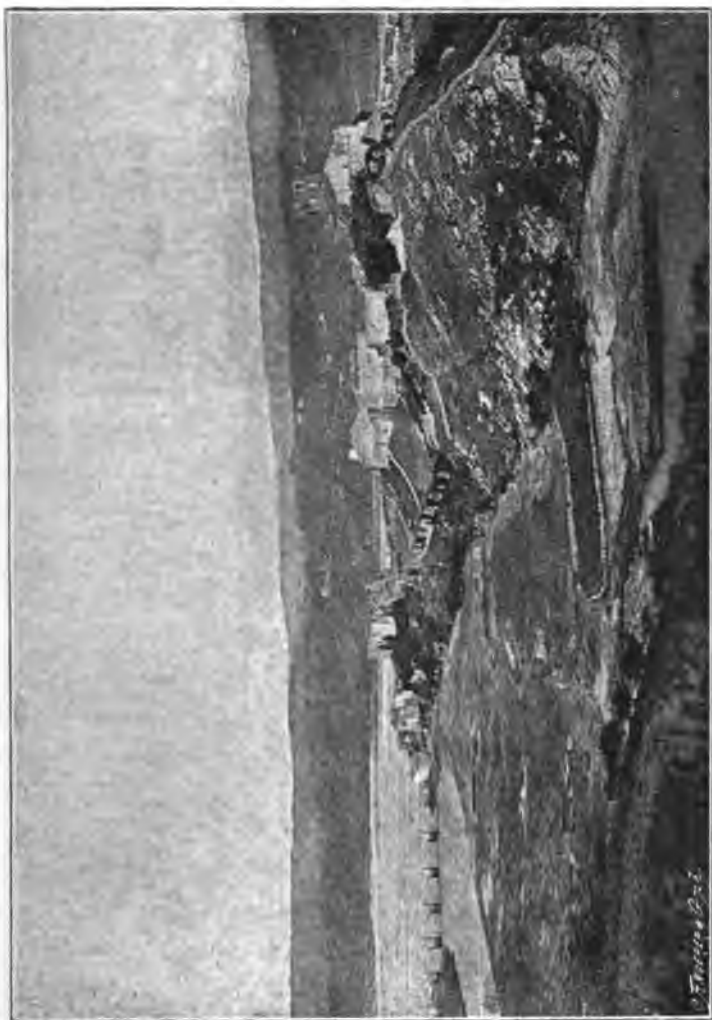
plaintiveness of the Asturian melodies was conspicuous by its absence from our Jehu's vocal utterances—he was expostulating with his horses, calling them by their names, and in a complaining way addressing them as to their lazy and generally disgraceful behaviour : Andēr, Andēr, Andēr, “Tchk—Tchk tchk—Dom—Pē—drō—Juan—ēta,” and now and again he would alternate this tenderness with a burst of untranslatable local Billingsgate to which, however, nobody, priest or layman, high or low, rich or poor, objected. . The horses went fairly well at a racing gallop up hill and very slowly down. Sometimes seven horses are driven in these diligence coaches, two pairs with a three in the middle. When this plan is adopted the driver usually provides himself with a bag of some objectionable-looking stones for the purpose of accelerating the pace of his two leaders. The accomplished driver will never fail to hit the ear of the horse he aims at with his piece of rock, and though it seems a bit cruel, yet our four-footed friends do not seem to feel this stone-throwing as much as they would a severe whipping ; but we are glad to say that as far as our experience goes in these northern roads there is little or no abuse of that great gift—horseflesh. The indescribable wink which our coachman would give as he neared a *posada* must be seen to be understood ; and the astonishing number of glasses of ginebra or Dutch gin (hollands) which he managed to put away, without in the least affecting his head, would be a

perfect surprise to those who think that we are the only nation in Europe who use strong waters. As a matter of fact, in the Cantabrian Highlands (though when they can get it good men practically sing the praises of the monarch of the Vine—in the shape of *vino tinto*), for a regular drink Dutch hollands is preferred. The country as far as the salt mines of Carbazon, and in fact all the way, is very interesting, and reminds the traveller of the softer portions of Welsh and Scotch scenery, with occasional patches, as it were, of purely rural England or Normandy. The snug little villages clustering under the hill-side, the murmur of some river well stocked with trout, the well-kept gardens, the fields of maize, the luxuriant hedges, the miles after miles of good roads fit for any of the “wheeling” confraternities, with the trees reaching overhead, are not all these things pleasant to see, pleasant to recall to one’s mind, pleasant to write about, for others to go and enjoy what we have enjoyed? Now and again an old ruined Moorish tower, then a stately farm-house, which in days gone by had belonged to some proud grandee and to-day was occupied by some equally proud yeoman farmer. And this pleasant ride, brimfull of interest by itself, is merely the preface to the Highlands of the Cantabrian range, the antiphon to the psalm of the beauty and grandeur of God’s creation, which can be read by those who can read in the limestone passes of the Asturian mountains.

The salt mines of Carbazon remind one of the

absurdly protective duty on this absolute necessary of life. The duty on English salt is 3 pesetas 50 cents per 100 kilos., and this infamous tax exists just to maintain a monopoly of a few Spanish salt-mine owners. Not very far from Torrelavega are the celebrated zinc mines of Rio Luiz, which, during the last twenty years, have returned to their fortunate owners immense sums of money. The original find was quite accidental in a field, and a deposit of calamine about a mile square and to an unknown depth has been the result. The mineral is simply dug out, being in fact quarried—not mined; in short, the so-called mine is an immense “pocket,” where twenty years ago pure agriculture ruled supreme.

Some hours after these mines several very steep hills are passed, and a splendid view is obtained of the most picturesquely situated town of San Vincente de la Barquera, located on the sea, and as it is approached on the coach-road crossing the high hills on the east which command the town few places of its kind in Europe can be said to be like it. San Vincente de la Barquera is unique. On three sides of the place it is surrounded by lagoons, and these are covered with wildfowl in the winter months. The Spaniard, however, is no sportsman, and consequently the birds are hardly ever thinned. If these waters were only properly attended to by gentlemen anxious “to go out and kill something, it being a fine day or night,” a new food supply might be created for at any rate some market, if the



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SAN VICENTE DE LA BARQUERA.

distance and difficulties of transportation prevented the export of the fowl to this hungry London of ours. These lagoons are formed in great measure by the river Barcenal which joins the main stream of the larger lagoon at Peña Candil about three miles from the town. A splendid bridge of twenty-eight arches, and built in 1433, crosses the main lagoon, and after going through the little town itself a modern bridge of eight arches lands the traveller on the main land opposite.

The Posada at this place is a poor one, and is called El Basilio, though the place is well worth a visit. Most travellers will, we think, follow our plan on our last "run through" to the Highlands, and content themselves with the exquisite panoramas of sea and mountain scenery to be had as one approaches and leaves the town while passing through in one of Mr. Plenty O'Watters' mail "coaches."

The Gothic church of San Vincente is only noticeable for a fine reclining figure of the Inquisidor Corro. In the hot summer time San Vincente boasts of quite a variety of smells, and as the little place is not favoured by an eau de cologne factory, the unsavoury odours uncontrolled and unopposed waft hither and thither perhaps to their entire satisfaction but to the average traveller's disgust.

Assuming that the coach left Torrelavega about 11 A.M., the authorised time it should reach San Vincente de la Barquera, is about two, and after a

hasty dismount for refreshment, the passenger will note as he crosses range after range of wild hills that at last he is approaching the country of the highest of the Cantabrian mountains, especially if it be a clear day; and on his left his eye discerns glistening in the afternoon sunshine the white snow caps of the Picos de Europa. These mountains—stated in all the encyclopædias and gazetteers to be almost impracticable and very little known—lie before him, and after traversing a long straight road for about two hours he will find himself, as we have done about four in the afternoon at the village of Unquera, asking our friend the driver (guard there is none) for the knapsacks or light valises with which alone it is advisable to encumber oneself in this remote part of Spain. The road to the Highlands has been gone over. We are in the Highlands themselves. The other road to Unquera *viâ* Santillana and the new watering-place of Comillas will be dealt with in one of our concluding chapters.



UNQUERA BRIDGE.

CHAPTER X.

THE NORTHERN POSTERN GATE.

PEACE and quiet are stamped on all that surrounds the pretty little village of Unquera, and after a hasty wash (why is it that the Spaniards will always insist on mistaking finger bowls for washing basins?) we strolled out over the wooden bridge which here crosses the shallow murmuring Deva, and this bridge it is which divides the village of Unquera, which is on the right-hand bank of the river, from the post-office of the hamlet called Bustio, where, at an inn kept by a brother of Señor Tetis, the coach pulled up. The view which met our eyes as we looked up the valley of the Deva was exquisite in its beauty. On either side of us were the long arms of the Cantabrian Hills, the white limestone strata here and there alternating with the green grass and stumpy vegetation. Higher up were the tall spires of the Picos de Europa, themselves standing like the sentinel guards of the splendid Picos, whose snowy tops, some 9,000 feet high, could be seen far away up in the distance. The plaintive music of the Deva reminded us of first impressions of the Dee in the land of brown heath and shaggy wood, and the perfect quiet that

surrounded us added a poetry to the scene that no words can express. Turning seaward we saw the perfect little lake which the Deva makes before it passes the narrow gorge which it has made for itself through the coast range of mountains that hide the Bay of Biscay and its troublous sea from the sight of the peaceful dwellers near the Unquera Bridge. Between us and these natural breakwaters were some pleasant looking flat meadows that increased the importance of the hills themselves. Village life is much the same all the world over. Added to Señor Tetis's posada is a small but well-stocked general store, and nearly opposite is the post-office, while quite a block or so away, as our transatlantic cousins would say, is the Estanco Nacional, where the Government retail their stamps, tobacco, and cigarettes. On the Unquera side is really a capital hotel kept by a Frenchman, Pierre Geoffroy, and the cooking, attendance and accommodation here are first class, the charges being remarkably moderate. Attached to this hostelry is a first-class kitchen and fruit garden, the sight of which in early autumn would, we think, alone repay the journey. The profusion and perfection of all the vegetables and fruits so dear to the palates of the Western European are certainly very striking. After a chat with the estimable landlord who rules the establishment just referred to—and which, by the way, boasts some twenty bedrooms, all kept in an admirable condition of cleanliness—we sauntered up the road on the right

bank of the Deva towards the village of Unquera proper. Near the church, of the ordinary Spanish type, a group of peasants, in their blue jean trousers and jackets with their red sashes and boinas, were chatting with the local *padre*, while in a crowd apart the women were having perhaps a "Home rule" parliament of their own. Very dignified and quiet, however, were the conferences, and as we respectfully raised our slouch hats as we passed the reverend father the whole of the assembled peasants and their priest doffed theirs in return. Near the village there are vast deposits of fossils from the nautilus to the smallest animalculæ, and the geologist will note with surprise and interest the marked features of the strata as they demonstrate the gigantic upheaving of the earth, or perhaps more correctly the bottom of the sea. Unquera Bridge is about a mile from the Biscayan Sea itself, and vessels of about 100 to 150 tons can come up to it. The exports are nearly exclusively calamine and blende, and a year or so ago they reached the respectable total of 18,000 tons, all going to Antwerp for manufacture into zinc. Pilots are always on the look out, but vessels drawing only ten feet of water can enter at any time. Considering by this time that the Solent, the English Channel, and the Western Highlands of Scotland, are, to put it mildly, fairly known by our yachtsmen, we would venture to suggest that they should vary the monotony of, say, Cowes to Cherbourg or Greenock to Oban by testing the sea-going qualities of their craft, by

facing the Bay and finding out for themselves in the landlocked estuary of the Deva (otherwise the port of Tina Mayor) the natural beauties of northern Spain which we are endeavouring in this volume to make known to them and others. The river Deva, which divides the province of Santander from that of the Asturias, is the best salmon-stocked river in Spain; no licences are required in the open season, and frequently fish exceeding thirty pounds in weight are caught; the trout, too, are most delicious and plentiful. As the river is full of fish, so the hills abound with variegated flora all the year round. In the spring it is simply possible to roll in crocuses, gentians and orchises, and as the summer advances you may collect such assorted bouquets as would be remarkably dear even on a cheap day (if such a thing exists) in Covent Garden. In the beautiful northern Spanish fall six varieties of heather can be seen, and as to the varieties of ferns—maiden-hair being specially prominent—they are simply countless. On the shingly sand surrounding the lake or port of Tina Mayor the botanist will find to his astonishment several sub-alpine plants which have been carried down the stream of the Deva from the lofty crags of the Picos, and here again a few feet above sea level can be found the rare heath *Erica Mackaiana*.

Later in the year the flora develops itself most rapidly, and the scent of the wild rose and the numerous early flowering plants carry the resident in one succession of pleasant feelings till full blown

summer arrives, when nature in its full robust youth asserts itself by flowering trees and shrubs innumerable. We have seen blossoming close by the Northern Postern Gate a low-lying shrub with a small leaf developing a very large four-petalled white corolla, which is so like the dog-rose that outside the plant itself it might easily be taken for it. However, it flourishes best at early dawn and fades altogether with the strong rays of the sun. Again, there is a most curious diminutive plant rising in a straight stem and without leaves, but having on it innumerable small flowers giving out a perfume that Messrs. Rimmel might envy, and which, if collected, would, we think, be turned to most profitable and beneficial account. Two species of green flowering anemones, one of which is highly scented, also appear about the late spring, as also does the ordinary wood anemone in its varied colours of white, red and blue. As the mountains proper are approached from Unquera, trees become rare, not, as we think, owing to their inability to find nature for development, but in ages gone by, as in most wild countries, the improvident have utilised God's gifts for fuel without thinking of the incumbent duty of replanting them; in fact, much is barren where even now flourish the chestnut and the walnut. However, it must be said of this *terra incognita* within four days from England that the near approach of a village is invariably marked by cultivation of various sorts, in some cases fruit trees, such as the pear, apple, and plum being

prominent, but owing to the strong winds and rains of winter these do not do so well as in other parts of "sunny Spain." A few words as to the climate of this lovely spot will be useful. In spring and summer it is similar to that in the south of England, with just the difference of being a few degrees warmer in temperature. Plentiful rains cool the atmosphere, but continuous rain longer than a day and a half rarely happens. In winter there is much wind and a good deal of rain, but snow seldom falls. The villagers themselves are happy, kindly people, and gladly welcome the stranger within their gates who knows how to behave himself. In a sedate fashion they have a strong sense of the humorous, and merry laughter is heard much more frequently in Unquera than in many of our own rural paradises in immaculate England; poverty, as we understand it, is simply unknown; the cottage homes are plainly but substantially furnished, the walls in most cases being adorned with a few loud coloured pictures of religious subjects relieved now and again by a Havana taken photograph of some child or relative who, like so many of the Cantabrian mountaineers, has gone to America, as they call the pearl of the Antilles. Conversing with some of these good folks after their chat with their pastor had terminated, we soon found out why it was that we had passed so many van-loads of emigrants on their way to join steamer at Santander during our coach ride that day. "Ah, Señor!" said one pleasant-looking elderly man

to us over a *copita* of red wine, "you do not know how we hate that accursed conscription. Is it not enough that we pay taxes and our dues, is it not enough that we are quiet, orderly people tilling the fields, going to mass, and spending in as well as we can the life the good God has given us, that that Government at Madrid should rob us of our flesh and blood and send our sons to die in some unhealthy place against their own and their fathers' will. No, Señor; if my boys must cross the sea, they shall go as free-born Spaniards, and so mine," and here the father looked the tenderness he felt, "have gone before the time the Government can claim them, and they are now, thank God, learning farming with my bachelor brother in America. If Spain was attacked or invaded, who would not be a soldier? Old as I am, I would go if I was worth anything; but it is white slavery to make colonial soldiers of the good lads who want to live where their fathers lived and die where their fathers died."

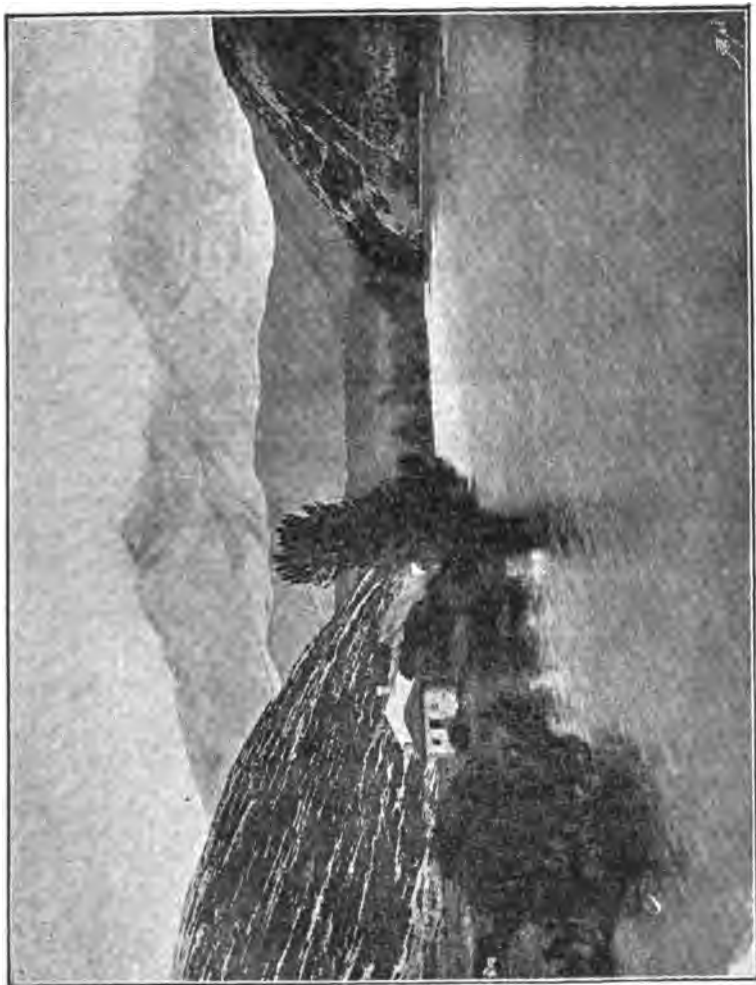
There is, the reader will observe by the foregoing, a skeleton even in the Spanish Arcadia we love so well. Into the question of the political necessity of the conscription we have no wish to enter, but that in the Highlands of Cantabria it is as a burning iron, eating out the loyalty of the people to the Government of Madrid, we can deliberately affirm, *Magnus est veritas*, &c. Shaking hands with the old peasant farmer we determined on putting up for the night at the hotel kept by the brother of "Plenty o' watter," and just

before sunset we reached the bridge. Westward, over Bustio and the little inn to which we were bound, the sinking sun shed a dark-red glorious halo over the hills; while looking to our left, the lofty crags of the Picos themselves here and there showing nature's eternal white mantle, reflected the warm rays and made a picture high up in the sky of a perfect setting of rubies, pearls, and diamonds. Leaning over the bridge and reflecting that far away in Southern Seas, in the distant Himalayas, or where the Sierra Nevada look down on the vineyards of fair California, we had never seen anything more perfect of its type; one of us quoted the well-known last lines of Thomas Ingoldsby:

“As I lay a-thynkyng the golden sun was sinking,
O merrie sang that bird as it glittered on her breast;
 With a thousand gorgeous dyes
 While soaring to the skies,
 'Mid the stars she seemed to rise
 As to her nest.

“As I lay a-thynkyng, her meaning was exprest:
 Follow, follow me away,
 It boots not to delay,
 'Twas so, she seemed to saye:
 Here is rest!”

and got in reward the eminently practical rejoinder of “Yes, quite so; it certainly does boot not to delay, for if we do not hurry up and get to Tetis's, the dinner will be quite cold.” From that hour sentiment was banished from our evening conversation, and the trail of the serpent was over us all.



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FROM UNQUERA BRIDGE.

When in an English country inn you ask what they have got, or what they can give the hungry traveller for the refreshment of the inner man, the reply is generally "anything you like, sir," which afterwards resolves itself into "a nice chop or steak, sir," or some cold roast beef and potatoes, with, in summer time, and this rarely, the occasional luxury of a half-cleaned, half-dried, decrepit-looking lettuce. When at Unquera we left the *menu* of our banquet to Señor Tetis, and this is the fare he provided us with : Vegetable soup, boiled potatoes, beans and cabbage, and sliced beef and bacon in cubes, pork cutlets with tomato sauce and chicken's liver, fish (trout) cutlets boiled, roast chicken and fried potatoes, cheese, salad, and roast apples, plum pudding ; dessert of all kinds ; coffee and cognac, or tea and anisette. The generous red wine which gratuitously accompanied this most substantial meal was done ample justice to, and lighting our pipes as the coffee and cognac were brought in we requested our host's company and spent a pleasant hour or so in conversation as to the fishing and the like. Of fishing stories there are no end on the banks of the Deva, and as they are very much like those one hears at the Invercauld Arms, Braemar, they are hardly worth repeating here ; but it seems that in the little Asturian village of Bustio there is an exact copy of Mr. Burnand's famous angler in 'Twickenhamshire,' who was always fishing and never caught anything. After this Thames-side follower of Izaak had been for about sixteen hours dibbling for chub without success

the editor of *Punch* thought of enlivening him with a mild joke, and said jocosely, "What the dibble are you doing?" the reply was to the effect that the head of the author of "Happy Thoughts" would most certainly be punched if he did not keep quiet. At Bustio there is the double of the irritated hero of Mr. Burnand's story. He has fished at the same spot by Unquera bridge daily for some fifteen years and mortal eyes have as yet not seen any result from his patient labour. If interrogated as to the pleasure he finds in ceaseless failure, he responds in a fashion which lets his questioner know that he is capable of bringing in very holy names into what may hardly be called, even with an excess of charity, a religious discussion. Another of Señor Tetis's stories was that of the astonished Englishman and his "pally ally," as the brother of "Plenty o' watter, yes," defined the inimitable Bass of Britain's Beerville, Burton, England. It seems that a Glasgow gentleman not utterly unconnected with the mining interests had been inspecting some properties in the Picos, and as he was unacquainted with a word of Spanish his hosts had written to the proprietor of Blanchard's Hotel to meet the coach on its arrival, give him what is known as a square meal and let him have some pale ale. The seeker after calamine and dollars duly arrived and was informed his meal was ready, when sitting down he found that his thoughtful hosts had provided him with *six* opened quarts of Bass's export brew, bottled by Reads of Kentish Town. The traveller was speechless from two causes ;

for the good of the house it is said he drank a bottle and a half, and as a natural consequence fell into a child-like slumber when going eastward in the coach, but what became of the remainder Señor Tetis did not know. The beer-drinking propensities of the English are well known, but the mind of a Franco-Spanish innkeeper must be really capable of big ideas when he thinks that a most temperate mining engineer could with ease put away a gallon and a half of Bass's best at a single sitting.

Later in the evening two commercial travellers turned up in the pleasant little room, which is Señor Tetis's principal apartment, and, anxious to learn all we could, we soon drifted into conversation. Both of our new-found friends were advanced free-traders, and bitterly regretted for their own sakes the prohibitory tariff which has shut out British manufactures in great measure from the Spanish market. Numerous instances were given on the injustice of the protective duties, especially in regard to common necessities of life, which are so cheaply manufactured in this country. One of the intelligent bagmen referred to informed us that a customer of his, an "Americano," who had resided for some time in England, insisted on having one of Brinsmead's best pianos, and, as a consequence of its being of British manufacture, his firm, and of course their client too, had to pay a duty of £12 10s., whereas if it had been of French or German make it would only have had to pay £8. It says much, however, for our manufacturers of certain classes of goods that they are able

at all to hold their own against such unfair competition. When the talking left the subject of Free-trade *versus* Protection, and drifted towards the respective merits of Republican or Monarchical governments, the retention of Gibraltar by Britain under such a truly "Liberal" and "peace-loving" minister as Mr. Gladstone, we suddenly found that our coach journey had very much tired us, and that to ensure the success of the pedestrian work to be done on the following day, it was absolutely necessary to go to bed. Accordingly, amid clouds of tobacco smoke, we said *bueno noches* and *adios* to our commercially-travelling friends, and were soon fast asleep in Señor Tetis's clean lavender-perfumed sheets, dreaming of some such impossibility as that of the heroic defence of the "Rock" by Mr. John Bright, ably assisted by a strong contingent of the "Perish India" confraternity.

When the bright sunshine woke us in the morning the concert of the Deva was in full swing; the old gentleman with his rod was, as our host had told us, at his usual fishing-for-nothing post by the bridge; the sky was brilliantly blue, a tempered breeze from the north was cooling the valley of the river, and under these favourable circumstances, and in light marching order, for our knapsacks were to follow by the coach, we said good-bye, after coffee and bread and butter (and such butter!), to Unquera and its bridge, and fearing nothing made on foot for the main gate at Panes. The northern postern gate was passed and won.



VIEW FROM PANES.

CHAPTER XI.

THE MAIN GATE OF PANES.

It will be noted from the heading of this, the preceding and other chapters, that we have constituted the Picos de Europa, the most lofty of the Highlands of Cantabria, into a sort of fortress, and in no boasting spirit we think the idea a very happy one. Regarding the Picos themselves as the citadel, they are only to be approached by two roads or gates, one from the north and the other from the south; and so strangely has nature in the eccentricity of her Asturian mountains clung to the similitude of a castle, that these roads pass through gorges which distinctly mark, like gates, progress to and from the heart of the wildest portion of all Spain.

The Gazetteers that we consulted about the Cantabrian region when we first thought of exploring it, were not consolatory reading—far from it. One said little is known about these mountains; there are no roads; banditti abound, and provisions, except the very coarsest food, are scarce and dear. That is the playful Gazetteer all over. Little is known, he says, and then out of his inner consciousness he evolves all that can be possibly said against

a country of which he admits his ignorance. The road, which would suit any kind of cyclist, being admirably kept in order, winds over some low hills which warden the northern postern gate, and then descends into the valley of the murmuring Deva, and for some considerable distance keeps that river's right bank. In summer, this Deva is a beautifully clear, limpid stream, singing its way to Tina Mayor, but in winter a turbid and strong-flowing torrent. When the descent into the valley has been made the main gate is approached, and if the reader takes our advice and goes and sees for himself, he will find himself in a gorge which for consummate grandeur we deliberately affirm has no rival in Europe. Our joint experience in the mountain fastnesses of Northern India and of other high lands under the Star-spangled Banner and the Southern Cross, to say nothing of the pleasant Swiss country, may be some guarantee that the enthusiasm we felt in passing the main gate of Panes, and which we are now endeavouring to express, is not the gush of the untravelled, but rather the real true feeling of those who know what beauty is, but have found something exceptionally majestic.

A mile or so after reaching the level of the Deva the exceedingly pretty village of Panes is reached, and before us stretches an undulating plain blocked in completely by the spurs of the Picos, while in front traversing in stern solemnity is the pioneer mountain of the Picos, the very striking peak of

Penamellera. Our photograph with the lonely church by the road side, and where the ever faithful Spanish Catholics have heard mass for some nine centuries or more, gives but a faint idea of the grandeur of the approach to the main gate. In our opinion it seems to dwarf the splendid wildness of the approach to a defile which, as Mr. Ball says, has nothing to approach it in Europe, except perhaps in a small degree that of the Brenta between Pinnolano and Bassano, through which that river finds its way from the mountains of the Tyrol into the plains of Venetia.

Gazing upwards at the limestone mountain sentinels at this magnificent main gate, the thoughtful traveller will at once be struck with the amazing wearing force of water, which has cut through 10,000 feet of rock deep, deep down, so that the rains of valleys south of these great heights should empty themselves into that deposit of all waters, the wide sea. It is certainly strange that the Deva, rising from many small sources to the south of the Picos, say about fifty miles from the bay, has literally found its way without a fall of 500 feet, through gigantic mountains 10,000 feet high, whose peaks are usually covered with snow. We do not know of any similar instance in all our travels or reading. Of the Deva it may certainly be said—

“The rocks stood against me and we wrestled,
But I burst from the holding of their hands,
Broke from their holding and went slipping
And sliding into lower lands.

“ I carolled as I went, and the woodlands
Smiled as my sound murmured by ;
And the birds on the wing heard me singing,
And sent me a blessing from the sky.

“ But I laughed as I left them in the sunshine,
There was never aught of rest for me,
Till I mingled my water with the ocean,
Till I sang in the chorus of the sea.”

Near the river's source is a very important town which will be described later on, and the small fall of water on the Deva's passage through the mountain passes of the Picos attracted the attention of the Spanish Government, who instructed a commission of engineers to report on the feasibility of canalising the stream as far as Potes, the town referred to. The story runs that with great pomp, and doubtless with considerable expense, the expedition started from Panes, and after they had passed the main gate and finding no obstacles they thought the scheme perfectly practicable. But alas for their hopes! a little higher up they discovered a small collection of boulders lying in the stream, of the weight perhaps of a thousand tons; and as this limestone collection had evidently fallen from the heights above, where there was plenty more to follow if need be, the commission returned disheartened, of course, and abandoned the absurd idea. The fact of such an expedition starting at all shows the ignorance which exists even in Spain of the Cantabrian mountains—in fact, there is no such thing



IN THE GORGE OF PANES.

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as a proper map of this region at all. We have said that the road is perfect—in fact we do not know any mountain road equal to it. It is nearly on a dead level for twenty miles, and men are constantly keeping it in the best state of repair. The handsome stone bridges which cross the Deva and other streams are models of their kind, and, as shown in one of our photographs, a low stone wall protects the unwary traveller from falling into the Deva, which runs parallel with the road nearly all the way through the Picos. This road was finished about 1868, and certainly reflects the very highest credit on the Spanish Government. Where the old road went, we have been unable to trace at the northern entrance, but as we were told by the villagers at Panes that a journey from the seaboard to Potes used to take two days (the coach now takes eight hours, being about four to five miles an hour), we presume that the travellers in old days did not follow the course of the Deva, but went from village to village, never dreaming of the simple expedient of utilising the banks of the river as a roadway, which, as we have said, the Government have done. It is strange that in Murray's Spain (the 1882 edition) not the least mention is made of this beautifully level road nor of the day coaches, that enable those unable to walk to see something of these glories of Asturian nature.

But it should be stated that shortly before entering the actual gorge itself, the remains of a very ancient bridge exist, with an arch in perfect

proportion, one half hanging over with ivy. We give an illustration from a photograph taken by us in a most difficult situation (as in fact nearly all the views given to our readers in this volume were) close by this relic of the past, which remains in strange juxtaposition to the modern metalled road. About a foot or two above the bed of the cold water of the swift-flowing Deva issues a hot alkali spring held in great repute for cure of rheumatism and other similar complaints; it is but a spring, but for hundreds of years the poor for miles around have come to bathe there; and although no bathing-house has been built at the spot its health-giving celebrity is annually spreading wider and wider. Quite recently two enterprising Englishmen well known to the authors have thought so highly of its curative properties as to pay for a permanent concession of the spring, with a view to building a large hotel and an extensive bathing establishment for the richer people who come here to find a healing hot bath. As we passed along the road we observed a sort of tent over the spring, this tent really consisting of a couple of blankets spread from boughs of trees, with an elderly man evidently keeping watch and ward outside. Enquiring who was within, he replied civilly enough that a lady who had had the "rheumatics" very badly of late was inside, and if we liked to see her we could. Quite a maidenly blush suffused our bronzed countenances as we politely but firmly refused to interrupt the señora at her medicinal ablutions.

We are now well in our castle; but even our photographs can do no justice to the grandeur of the pass, or show the altitude of the mountains. As you advance by the wood close to the river-bed, the scenery develops every second; now you have a towering height of six to seven thousand feet in front of you, and turning round behold great masses of isolated rock which had before escaped your notice in the bewildering walls of limestone which on all sides surround and tower above you. The Via Mala, the Simplon, and other passes are grand enough for an hour or so, but the gorge of the Picos surpasses either in magnificence, being, in fact, between twenty and thirty miles in length. The cañons of the Sierra Nevada or the Yosemite have nothing to show to this; and yet this unknown country is only four days' journey from Charing Cross Station. Ever-flowing cascades are continually passed, falling from great heights, and these are absolutely lined with that most delicate of all ferns, the maiden-hair. So prolific is this fern in the pass of the main gate, that we have wondered that some enterprising florists like Cutbush have not sent a clerk out to fill baskets of this fern for their retail customers. We present that eminent firm with this gratuitous hint, for which they ought to be grateful.

In these damp dripping falls and on the limestone rock, we have noticed a flower which at first seemed a large growing violet, but on closer inspection we found to be more delicate and more beautiful. We

have done our best to import this plant into England, but so far have failed, the absence of its native air being probably the cause. As a hint to botanists, we should say that it is evidently a plant which is nurtured on hydrate of lime. The scenery is limestone, road and river; for mile after mile not a house is to be seen, yet so varied are the limestone formations, so sweetly sings the river, and so good is the road, that the pedestrian who can see with his eyes, and think with his head, will find the time only too short. Now the gorge will enlarge a little, and then it will narrow again as abruptly. Now it seems as if escape, except by flying, was impossible; the walls of limestone are all surrounding, and if the traveller looks upward with a view of getting away, he will hear again and again the mountain eagle's peculiar note, or the night owl's more dismal sound.

The half-way house through the pass is the little inn of Urdon; and though the quick pedestrian will do the distance from Unquera in a few hours, we have lovingly lingered over one of the grandest developments of nature we have ever seen. If the pass of Panes, if the towering limestone mountains surrounded in the lower lands and on their spurs by forests of oak and olive trees, if a region where the rains of winter and the genial warmth of summer generate the rarest plants, does not interest the traveller and make him reflect on the littleness of man and the greatness and goodness of God and His creation,

nothing ever will. And yet there are people like this. We remember once on a voyage from the City of the Golden Gate to Auckland pointing out to a fellow-passenger the flower-wreathed atolls of the South Sea. "Ah," said His Serene Intelligence our friend, "those are atolls, are they? I wonder they are not more punctual in serving lunch." But that man, we are glad to say, was a miserable exception, and the great majority of mankind love nature and revel in it. There are those who are perhaps tired of the hackneyed Switzerland or Rhine, and we say to them, try the Picos, walk if you possibly can, from Unquera to the inn of Urdon; forget all about politics, the Stock Exchange, dates of bills payable, and what to do with your boys; and if you don't sleep at Urdon a happier and a wiser man, the joint authors of this work will be exceedingly sorry. The beauties of nature were given by a beneficent Creator for man's enjoyment; we have seen her grandeur in Cantabria, and we want others to go and enjoy it like we have ourselves. In our enthusiasm about the scenery, however, we have forgotten one very important item, and that is, in the village of Panes, which of course is on the northern side of the gorge, are two excellent hostelries, that kept by Señor Manuel Gomez being, in fact, a model of a mountain hotel, and would shame many of the establishments in Scotland. We have no authority for saying so, but we understand that if the Spanish Government did not charge so heavy a tax on

sign-boards Señor Gomez intended to have a board put out with, on the north side, these lines :

Before you venture this here pass,
Take a good refreshing glass.

and on the south side :

Now you're over take another,
Your drooping spirits to recover ;

and thus follow the example of the well-known inn-keeper of Penmaenmawr, in North Wales.

On the last occasion, however, when we passed through this village of Panes, evidently derived from *pan* (bread), as the place where that necessity is manufactured for the neighbouring mountaineers, we supped at the *Estanco Nacional*, which, as is often the case, is a hostelry as well. Here we fared right sumptuously.

The excellent landlady of this Government establishment, who must be anonymously immortal, as we have, to our shame be it said, forgotten her spouse's name, is not only a mistress of the divine art of cookery (an eighteenth century Choctaw Indian on the warpath would have been soothed by such a meal as we had), but adds to her other accomplishments a keen insight into human character based on—noses. Like the first Duke of Wellington, she is a firm believer in the lucky possessors of large and prominent nasal organs, her own being specially prominent, and as one of us boasts a typical Roman

cast of feature, she laughingly said to her husband as we entered, that to one at least of the Señors Ingleses she must be related, seeing how much alike were our promontories of intelligence and wit. Her lord and master, who affects a nose of unclassical size and shape, said it was a good joke; but perhaps, like the famous parrot, thought the more. In the bar-room of this *estanco* is one of those curious placards of advice which one occasionally sees in out-of-the-way public-houses in England, its purport being—"Come in here often, drink moderately, be good company, pay the reckoning, go home quietly, be at peace with all men." Perhaps it is a far cry from Panes to Glasgow, but in a certain warehouse on the Clyde side we have seen a much more satirical notice than the one just quoted. It is headed "Hours of Business," and thus proceeds: "From 9 to 12 we see insurance agents, lightning-rod sellers, and people who sell books in numbers; from 12 to 2, missionaries out of collar with collecting cards, professional mendicants, and men with church subscriptions on the brain; from 2 till 5, and all day, commercial travellers, and in fact anybody who likes to call, make themselves at home, smoke about the place, and lounge and gossip. We attend to our own business in the *middle of the night*."

CHAPTER XII.

THE HIGHEST PICOS.

PERHAPS our happiest photograph is that of the little inn at Urdon, and the towering masses of limestone mountains that precipitately rise behind this modest little hostelry. To the traveller who wishes to thoroughly enjoy this most beautiful region we would say, break the journey at Urdon, ask for the genial landlord Santiago, and in half an hour he will show you as fine scenery as you may find in Europe. The house itself is a little more than a mile from any human habitation, and being clean and comfortable, is an excellent "stay over" place for those who can exist for a few days without the luxuries of a Pall Mall club, and cooking worthy of Delmonico's *chef*. Looking upwards, one of the most perfect of mountain torrents joins the noisy Deva to the left of Santiago's inn, and it is this stream which turns the host's mill, for he combines the three avocations of licensed victualler, as we should say, miller, and general store-dealer. Like many other inns and private houses in the more remote parts of Spain, Santiago can boast of a clock which always



THE INN AT URDON.

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strikes the hours twice—the second time being, we presume, a reminder to get up or go to bed, or keep that nearly-forgotten appointment. The makers of these double-striking clocks, however, could never have contemplated the new way of reckoning time—a clock that would, say, twice strike twenty-three would, we think, after a time be voted an unmitigated nuisance. As a rule, in rural Spain books and newspapers are rarely met with. The great majority of the adult population can neither read nor write, and if they did they would, in our opinion, care little for books or what is going on in the outside world. In Bilbao itself, for instance, there are only two or three small daily sheets as newspapers. It was therefore with some few feelings of surprise that we found at the inn of Urdon quite a small library of good books, mostly of ancient date, but all bearing marks of having been extensively read, but whether by Santiago or his family we did not inquire. One of these works was a sort of Spanish McCulloch's Dictionary of Commerce published in Madrid more than fifty years ago. The author was evidently an advanced Free-trader, and his denunciations of the absurdly protective tariff of his country would be salutary reading at the present day. In this quaint collection of literature—is it not Charles Lamb who says that nothing is more delightful to find hidden away in a window-sill cupboard of an old postinghouse, than a number of old time-forgotten magazines?—we came across a fairly sized song-book which we

brought away with us. The letterpress was set up at Valladolid about fifty years ago, but the accompanying reproduction of the remarkable woodcuts which illustrate the text will show the least learned of our readers in antiquarian matters that the "blocks" have done heroic duty for their country's ballads for at least two centuries, perhaps a good deal more.

Santiago boasts other things besides his library—he is a very practical man, and his chief mundane glory is his big pig. The loving way in which he would reflectively look at that fat *porco* was amazingly funny to witness, but it tempered our mirth to consider that long ere these lines would reach our readers and our critics that pig would know Urdon no more. In the matter of cuisine Santiago's hostelry can be strongly recommended, considering where the place is situated. His good spouse, who must know nothing of the merits of Allan's Antifat, well looks after that most necessary kitchen, and she has quite mastered the art of providing a most delicious supper for two hungry pedestrians, a luscious trout just taken from the Deva's bed being a prominent feature of the meal. To those who do not entertain an invincible dislike to garlic in a modified form we would warmly commend our Urdon host's *cheritas* or sausages, made from pork trotters, pepper, and spices. We consider them not only first-class eating, but a fine stomachic, but then *chacun à son goût*: and we have so often roughed it on damper and sprats in oil



THE TROUBADOUR TIRED.



“WHY IS THE WORLD SO GAY TO-DAY?”



THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT AND THE
FAMOUS BEANSTALK.



“HE COMETH NOT, SHE SAID.”
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"DON'T BE ANGRY WITH ME, DARLING."

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—called sardines—that perhaps our judgment in these matters is not to be always relied on. We give our own experience and opinion for what it is worth. Sometimes boiled yams and salt have been more enjoyable eating than a fifteen-course dinner at the Café Voisin in Paris. Like the boys who will destroy their sisters' mechanical dolls to find out how the thing works, we determined to penetrate into the culinary sanctorum and discover where all these good things were prepared for our delight. It was a spacious room, with a noble fire-place where pots were boiling.

Seats were all round this really old-fashioned hearth, and by the glow of the wooden embers jokes were bandied out, stories of by-gone days told, village gossip retailed, and when the ashes of the last pipe had been knocked out we retired to a cosy little double-bedded room, and our lullaby being sung by the Deva on its way to the sea, we were soon tended by Nurse Sleep.

The climb to the mountain-tops of the highest Picos must be commenced at Urdon, and the path on leaving the inn is to the right of that building. It is a plain, unpretending mountain highway, about half the breadth of the Government road, but whether the ascent is made in daylight or in the calm twilight at the close of a Spanish summer day, the traveller should certainly not fail to note the extraordinary physical features of the crags which lie close to this most romantic portion of the Asturian province.

Within a stone's throw of the inn there is facing the main road a cavern, now used as a kind of shelter for goats and sheep, which, viewed with some of the ideas our Spanish travels engender in our mind, might be held to be the entrance to some Rock Demon's castle. A very narrow pathway zigzags to its entrance, and if the tourist is disposed to traverse this goat-track he will be rewarded by a good view of the deep and black interior of the cave. Of course caverns are common enough in all mountainous countries, but if the reader has the least artistic eye he will see much more than black caves presumably occupied by hobgoblins, but really by goats. Gaze upward, reader, take in the precipitous crags rising straight up on either side of you, and if your imaginative and art powers have not been destroyed altogether by too much of the scenery of the Underground Railway, you will see the faithful representation of two ruined castles, the towers, gateways, entrances, keeps, and outer fortifications all complete, and this dark cavern, the photograph of which as shown by us can give no idea of the beautiful tints of brown, grey, and even green forms, the only apparent ingress to our *châteaux en Espagne*, created perhaps by our fancy, but which we venture to think would be noticed by other eyes than ours. On the first occasion when we saw the cavern, in front of its dark entrance was a small lattice-work of rudely constructed boughs to keep in the animals enclosed for the night—down the deep



THE CAVES AT URDON.

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gorge of the limestone crags some stray rays of the setting sun had wandered, and we wished not only for the pen of a word painter, but for the science yet to be, of photography in colours, to do simple justice to the scene that met our gaze. In these strange freaks of nature this neighbourhood abounds. High up in the Picos can be discerned from the inn of Urdon two most astounding natural bridges, through which at certain hours of the day the sun shines as through a lens. These have never been explored. The natives know little about them, and care less, and as they are on the Santander side of the Deva—and little love is lost between the people of the two provinces, or, rather, they are not gushing over each other—Santiago and his friends could tell us nothing; perhaps some day some Whymper of the Highlands of Cantabria will unfurl the Union Jack from one of these natural bridges, which are to be seen glittering in the sun some 6000 feet above the valley of the Deva at Urdon. Santiago is certain to ask the tourist whether he has seen the "Cathedral," and although we have often stayed at Urdon, and even photographed the spot, it was only on our last departure that we appreciated what he meant. One dusky night, however, with the faintest of moons, and an atmosphere slightly misty, we were taken by our landlord about 500 yards from his house, and in an instant the phantasmagoria was before us—a grand Gothic cathedral with two towers rose before our vision as if by magic; one of the towers was slightly

broken as if from age or bombardment; the doors were well marked, and apparently sculpture of the most delicate nature rose above it. The structure was gigantic, and almost excited feelings of reverential awe. In daylight we tried to see the edifice again from the same ground, but all in vain: it was evidently the weird fancy of the night, and like a summer's dream faded with the first rays of the rising sun.

We have to get to Tresviso, and the sooner we start the better. On a very light lunch of a cherita or so and bread, washed down with red wine, we said good-bye for a few days to host Santiago and Urdon, and made for the higher Picos, the homes of the bear and the chamois. Again we started not over encumbered with baggage, as our obliging friend the innkeeper insisted on sending up our knapsacks by one of his people who had business at the quaintly remote village which was our destination. The field-glasses were secured, and a little flask filled with diluted spirits carefully pocketed, while a military canteen that has done yeoman's service for its owner in many a bloodless fight in English and Colonial manoeuvres, was filled to the brim with the pure cause of the melody of the river we were leaving, and duly slung, and away we started—"outward and upward bound."

For perhaps half a mile the narrow road by which we wish to conduct the reader to the highest Picos follows the mountain stream or river (we do not

know its name), first on the right bank and then on the left; a turbulent torrent below a lovely wooded, ferned and shrubbed companion to the pathway on the left. Above us rises a 6000-foot sheer precipice of caverned and crevassed rock, from which dizzy height the "enterprising goatlet when a mining," now and again sends a reminder of its existence by playfully sending a boulder or two into the stream below. Few accidents, however, have happened from this source, but it should be remarked that nature after very wet weather is much more responsible for falling stones in the Picos than all the rock-removing goats in the province. This we do not doubt will serve as a word of warning and caution to those who will follow our steps. Before the real ascent is commenced a most picturesque wooden bridge is passed, as shown in the photograph from this spot; it is just as well to contemplate the road upwards, for "Excelsior" is the motto for the day. The road up a precipice of 6000 feet is before us, and from the top of that precipice a stone could be dropped on the bridge on which we were standing. It is really a wonderfully constructed road, this mountain path to Tresviso; it takes advantage of every gully, of every rock, and every vantage point, going steadily upwards and onwards in zigzag fashion all on the face of the mountain side. At times, in fact, as of course, the path is very tiring, but it is so well made as not to cause an average pedestrian much distress. Water or liquid refresh-

ment should always be taken, as not a drop is to be had the whole way. The scenery of the valley as taken in from the ledge walk on which you are walking is grand, but very barren and rocky. After going some distance with fairly comfortable gradients you have to face a straight incline of about one in five, and this continues for about a thousand yards or more, and here it is that the bold mountaineer will first appreciate the fact that he is no longer traversing the flags of Fleet Street, the green sward of Hyde Park, or even the sweet shady side of Pall Mall. This incline, too, is a perfect sun-trap, and in all our vigorous mountaineering experience in much higher altitudes, we have never felt more exhausted than we have at this particular spot in the comparatively speaking short road to Tresviso. Yet, when the mines close by that place were being worked, bullock carts descended to the river level by this very path, and two bullocks would bring down, say a ton or two of ore, daily as a rule, without accident. A casualty, however, means instantaneous death, for as before stated, the road can be seen from the bridge below the altitude, at this point being slightly more than 6000 feet. Of course there have been fatal accidents on this ascent, but they are few and far between, and the novice in mountain work should be cautious in how he goes near the edge of the precipice or of his foot-hold of the ground when loose stones abound. There is, however, no real danger for the sensible. Fools and practical



THE ROAD TO TRESVISO.

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jokers had far better stay at Santiago's, and from his comfortable verandah contemplate the fat pig of their time. There are stories, too, of this ascent anything but consoling to the very British notion that, as in everything else so we lead the van of the wide wide world in mountain climbing, and that in matter of nerve we are simply unapproachable in our supremacy. Well, the Urdon folks, and in this the inhabitants of Tresviso are agreed, *do* say, that once upon a time, and not so very long ago either, a certain Englishman of somewhat over the middle stature, being in fact as long as six feet four, managed (notwithstanding his evident terror), by keeping away from the precipice on the one side, and by hugging the rock on the other, to struggle up to the village above, but when he was obliged to return he could not possibly stand upright and contemplate the depths below without vertigo—and rather unheroically finished his Spanish experience of mountaineering by descending on all fours backwards, necessitating, on his ultimate arrival at Urdon, a certain patch being inserted in the hindermost portion of his nether garment. We attempted to take a photograph of the view from this precipitous cliff with the wish to show the lower bridge from the height; but the camera would not obey us at the angle, and if it had been possible, it would have had to have been lashed with lens *downwards*, a position rarely taken even in modern photography of the most advanced school. Perhaps Messrs.

Boning and Small, or some other great scientists in this art, will succeed where we have most dismally failed.

The mountain torrents which empty themselves into the Deva at Urdon seem to have, like their bigger sister, cut their way deep down almost to the sea-level, and as you ascend even higher than the spot we have just referred to, you can still hear their ceaseless roaring. In fact, from the perpendicular precipice on which you stand, a little higher up it is nothing more or less than a sheer fall of something like 6000 feet into the bed of the stream. When at last, after a hard toil of two hours' duration, we reached a green plateau near the mines of Tresviso, how welcome was the rest and the sight of the green grass, how sparkling was the cool Deva water (we will modestly say nothing about that little flask), and how pleased we felt that without over-fatigue or worry we had done the ascent in fair Asturian "schedule time"! After a well-earned lounge on the sward, gazing down the valley of rocks walled in by other ranges or rather spurs of the Picos—after noticing how their white crags were lit up fancifully by the playful afternoon sun, we again trudged onwards and upwards, and some 500 feet further we found ourselves welcomed most cordially by Don Haime of Tresviso, in other words, Mr. James Pontifex Woods, a gentleman who with his accomplished wife and two children and two domestics, one English and one Spanish, pioneers the

Picos for the benefit of mineralogical research, and the development of the rich pockets which surround his certainly retired location. Of our kindly hospitable reception at the hands of Mr. Woods and his family we will say but little, except that it was what anybody who knows aught of him and his surroundings would expect. The best he had at his disposal was ours—and tendered in such a fashion as not to be easily forgotten. And having said this, what more can we say? Mr. Woods' house is a substantial wooden building of the bungalow order, situate on the side of the mountain, and it commands, as perhaps we need not say, views of great beauty and interest. A small flower and vegetable garden extends to the cliff side, and attached to the house is a small stable for a pony or donkey. Mr. Woods being a great naturalist, we were not surprised to find that the walls of his reception-room were literally covered from floor to ceiling, and ceiling too, with specimens of birds and the like; the skin of a gigantic chamois killed close by the house adorned one corner, while the outspread wings of a large eagle in another showed that there was local sport in the air as well as on the land. We have no space for a catalogue of Mr. Woods' curiosities—to the interested they alone are well worth the trudge up the mountain pathway. Perhaps at the time when we first saw them we were more anxious about dinner than eagles or even chamois, and a first-class meal being disposed of, we gathered our chairs round the blazing

wood fire—oh! the occasional puffs of that smoke which would come down and not go up the chimney—and after discussing the affairs of the world from China to Peru, cousins at Hampstead and at Suakim, friends also under the meteor flag in New Guinea, and others skating at Montreal, we woke the surrounding echoes of the towering Picos still above us by vocally rendering in the best fashion we could aspire to such English ballads as memory could furnish. How is it that the dear old English music always sounds so infinitely sweeter far away—miles away from St. James's Hall, than it does at that home of ballad concerts and Monday Pops? But it does, gentle reader, and we know the experience of almost crying over a rendering of "Tom Bowling," (which that infallible authority the *Church Times* once described as a music-hall song—heaven save the mark!) in a New Zealand "run," which, if we had heard it near the Piccadilly Circus, would have driven us frantic. Well, we astonished the nerves of the Spanish servant with "D'ye Ken John Peel?" and "Hearts of Oak," with now and again some harmonised *Volkslied*, and after a very pleasant evening, feeling much like that most excellent fellow the village blacksmith when he had done or accomplished something, we accompanied a guide with a lantern still up the mountain-side to the house of the good padre of the village of Tresviso, Mr. Woods having all his sleeping accommodation occupied by the presence of a lady friend, the wife of Mr. Brindley,

the resident engineer of some adjacent copper mines, and who, we since learn, is building a house for himself not very far from the British outpost of Don Haime. Of the two English ladies, suffice it to say that they would have personally graced any drawing-room in Britain. After that plain statement of unvarnished truth the dullest reader will apprehend how they were regarded 6000 feet above the level of the Deva river.

It was pitch dark when we left the hospitable roof of Don Haime, and it was pouring with rain too, a strong wind was blowing across the valley, and now and again icy sleet seemed to circumvent the collar of our waterproofs and go in for the manufacture of slides down our bare backs. The path was certainly new to one of us; a very nearly perpendicular precipice was on our left hand; the village before us showed not the solitary twinkle of a farthing dip, and then of course—for troubles never come singly—that lantern went out, according to the immemorial custom of all lanterns when they really are wanted. After a good deal of groping and feeling we got at last to a place of shelter, where our good friend the village sacristan managed by some means or other to rekindle his lantern and our hopes of ever reaching Tresviso alive, and some ten minutes later we entered upon our night's repose at the parsonage of Tresviso, of which we have more to say in our next chapter.

As, however, we have dropped this particular portion of our work, the highest Picos, we should say

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here, before dwelling on the ethnological view of the question, that, far and away beyond the 6000 feet of Tresviso, the Highlands of Cantabria climb the Spanish sky, their loftiest peak being about 11,000 feet above sea-level. In really good weather, especially in spring, a most agreeable walk on a fairly good road (patent leathers had better be left with Santiago) can be taken from Tresviso village itself, through field after field of crocuses, gentians, and other mountain flowerets, towards the upper heights. In all weathers a panorama of scenery, mostly of the grandly stern order, meets the eyes of those who can appreciate nature in this guise. Here and there will be seen rugged peaks, snow-capped and frequently untrodden by the foot of man. Nestling under the bleak sides a large forest of beech trees will be noticed a few miles from the village, and this is the last remaining bit of sylvan wealth in this part of the Asturias. Commercial common sense is not a marked feature of the modern Spaniard, and so it is that millions of acres of this tree have been deforested for fuel purpose, without a thought of replantation. As the Spaniards treated the vegetable wealth of South America, so they have done in their own favoured land. Our love for Spain and her people compels us to hope that these lines will meet the gaze of some of their enlightened rulers, and that the universal law of nature, that to reap one must sow, will be in the future more understood in the peninsula. This mountain road—

avoid it as the plague after a heavy rain—leads to the quaint village of Sotres, which, being interpreted, means “There ARE three”—from the Spanish *son-tres*—that being the report of some primitive returner of the census, perhaps some centuries ago. Tresviso gets its name from Tres-viso, “I SAW three;” and the general opinion is that the Government collector, having climbed the hill to the last-named place, declined, salary or no salary, to go a step farther. Sotres, and the equally out-of-the-way village of Tielba, he fairly gave up and took as gospel what the Tresviso people told him. These mountain villages are very much alike, except for some little differences not unconnected with the manufacture of cheese, which we will explain further on, and *ex uno disce omnes*. We will take Tresviso as our model, and the following pages will demonstrate as well as we can what sort of place it is, the kind of people who are its inhabitants, the lives they lead, and the stories which have localised themselves about its unique position.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MOUNTAINEERS.

THE worthy cura had gone to Valladolid for a few days, so we had the run of the "parsonage," which was about the size of the lock-up of many a snug English rectory. The house of the reverend padre was about the only one in the little community of Tresviso that boasted a glass window or two, but they were of such diminutive size as practically to render the gloom of the little rooms more apparent. The sacristan and his wife live with their pastor, and the good lady keeps the place scrupulously clean. The furniture, however, cannot take up much time in its cleaning, there being so remarkably little of it. The worthy clergyman whose kindly roof was covering us evidently never contemplated that two persons would sleep in his bed, or in his charity he would have had a bigger one built by the village carpenter. The "clothes" difficulty puzzled us for a time—it was either all or none—but we solved the question by each taking a couple of blankets and rolling them round our bodies; we were then independent of each other. Thus, as "*mummies à la sardine*," we passed

the night, and were not sorry to rise early on the following morning and gaze around at certainly the quaintest village in all Spain. The cottages are irregularly scattered all over the mountain-side. A Spartan simplicity pervades each of their interiors, but they are all clean and well kept. In Mr. Murray's last edition of his *Guide to Spain* he says that at Tresviso "no wine is ever drunk." All that we can say is, that in October of last year we asked for the taberna, were quickly taken there, had a few glasses of excellent red wine, in the consumption of which we were ably assisted by several intelligent villagers, who informed us from time immemorial that there had always been a wine-shop in the village, though Mr. Murray was quite correct in his addendum that no doctor or apothecary's shop has ever been known there. Certainly a healthier set of people than the Tresviso villagers it would be impossible to find anywhere, though they have that hard weather-beaten look which always distinguishes the exposed mountaineer. The ages of these people will indicate their health. One old gentleman at Tresviso boasts the fine life record of one hundred and four years, while nonogenarians are plentiful. During our last stay at this most romantically situated place an "elderly" lady of the village—she was not called old, being only eighty-four—came up the mountain path from Urdon carrying on her head the weight of her years in avoirdupois, her burden being, in fact, just eighty-four or eighty-five pounds.

The dress of the villagers differs from that of any part of Spain; the men *en grande tenue* wear short thick jackets of Tresviso-spun woollen cloth, breeches of the same material, opening for a little upwards on the sides from above the knee, and stout homespun stockings, with curiously made local boots or shoes with a large flap going all over the foot itself. Their head-dress is a kind of cloth cap with a widish brim, which, so the Urdon people say, is "cocked" when its fortunate owner is in luck's way or has come into any money or the like. So many of the inhabitants of Tresviso, however, appeared to us to go about with cocked hats that we are inclined to think the idea a mere fancy on the part of the lowlanders as the outcome of highland arrogance. The women all wear homespun cloth dresses, with shawls of a like material for head covering. Both male and female garments last an incalculable time, and traditions of coats and petticoats being worn by generation after generation exist. It would seem impossible to practically wear out Tresviso-made cloth. It is needless to say that it is coarse in finish, but useful more than ornamental, and does what many finely-named English cloths fail to do—it keeps its wearer dry and warm from the rain or sleet or snow.

Tresviso is of course a purely agricultural village, and down the steep mountain-sides can be seen the little children of the place carefully tending their sheep. Where all is quaint it seems impossible to particularise, but certainly the church at Tresviso is

alone worth the excursion up the limestone precipices of the Picos de Europa. It is very old, being built of grey limestone with a campanile with two bells in it bearing date 1613; small-sized windows up by the roof make the church very gloomy and dark. The floor is remarkable for its unevenness, and reminded us more of the paving of a first-class street in New York "in the days that once were golden" for the Tammany ring than anything else. The pulpit and confessional are the unaided work of the good parish priest; the first is both neat and gaudy, as his reverence is evidently fond of colours. As to the latter, owing to the peculiar colour and texture of the curtains, it would be suggestive, even to the most reverent visitor, of the erection in which at street corners Punch and Judy and their ceaseless wrangling delight a casual audience. Over the high altar is a wooden reredos also painted by the padre, and the two side altars have also been ornamented by him. With fear and trembling we should show this little mountain village church to some severe æsthetic Anglican, or one of the "good taste" school at the Oratory or the "Pro." In fact we doubt whether some of those queer-minded people who look at everything through West-end-of-London art spectacles would survive the "decoration" of this lonely outpost of the Universal Church in the Asturian mountains; but there is another side to the question. For more than ten long centuries the books of the church and the registry of births,

marriages, and deaths go back, and the Christian people of Tresviso have worshipped in this humble little shrine. The tinkle of the acolytes' bell has rung there just the same, and with just the same meaning, as it has in the loftiest cathedral, and if its ornamentation be "unartistic" and "tawdry," the lesson to the thinking mind of the parish church of Tresviso is told in the inscription painted on its porch by the pastor of the place, "*Esta es la casa del Dios y Puerto del cielo*"—"This is the house of God and the gate of heaven."

When referring to the subject of decoration it reminds us that in the matter of harvest festivals they rather overdid the thing some years ago in Lancashire, when they put on the altar of the church a pig's head, and they fell into a similar error some short time ago at Tresviso. Mrs. Pontifex Woods gave to one of the village children a rather handsome doll of English manufacture. The mountaineer children of Northern Spain do not seem to care in the least for toys or dolls, so the little girl gave her present to the parish priest. In whatever way the clergyman regarded the gift we do not know, nor have we been able to make inquiries, but the doll has since been seen on one of the altars of the church, but whether it was placed as a votive offering or not we are also ignorant.

Close to the church is the *campo santo*, and, nestling near by its outer wall, is the only English grave in Tresviso. This eloquent reminder of the "unhappy

divisions" that exist among Christians is the last resting-place of one of Mr. Woods' little children.

The village school, which has about thirty or forty scholars, is more in the centre of the village than the church. The children here seem to be well and carefully taught by a most patient young man. As an instance of how thoroughly Tresviso is out of the way, so to speak, the teacher referred to showed us a great curiosity—some ordinary school slates, just received from Madrid, and which, as he told us, he shortly intended to introduce into the school. At the time he spoke the little boys before us were learning the last of the three R's by means of making their figures on the shoulder-blades of oxen.

But a volume could be written about Tresviso and its surroundings. So struck was His Majesty King Alfonso when he first visited the neighbourhood in August, 1882, that he insisted on the worthy mayor of the place accompanying him to Madrid, where he rode through the city in the same carriage with the king. What the worthy alcalde of Tresviso thought of the capital we do not know; but that he was as struck with Madrid as his sovereign was with Tresviso, we think is open to doubt.

Communication is, however, regularly kept up between Tresviso and the outer world by means of a postman, who every other day ascends and descends the steep hillside from Urdon. His pay is not magnificent, being in fact only fivepence (half a peseta) each time he makes the journey, and, in-

credible as it would seem to us, he is paid by the authorities in *bills*. From this wretched pittance some small deduction has to be made to cover the cost of discount.

Tresviso is famous for its cheese, which is a kind of Stilton, and is locally known as Picon. At times it is very full flavoured, so much so that an English gentleman, who was bringing a few home as presents to his relations, was stopped by the French authorities at the frontier railway station for the usual purposes of customs examination. Our friend told them it was some rare Spanish cheese. The French douanier looked serious and suspiciously at a comrade. They evidently thought the faint odour they smelt was connected with some dark deed of blood, and the object of the obstinacy of the Englishman in not opening his package was not to criminate himself by showing his human remains. Wrapper after wrapper was taken off, cloths were carefully removed, and when the Picons' full flavour met the custom-house officials they fairly bolted and ran. Mild specimens are to be had, however, and to our taste this Tresviso cheese is most delicious. Between the villages of Sotres and Tresviso an ancient rivalry has existed, and some few years ago it threatened to break out into a regular set-to between the males of both places. At any rate, the good folk of "*There are three*" said that the villagers in "*I see three*" accused them of putting no butter in their (the Sotres-made) cheese, and as this was a wicked, baseless fabrication, they



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THESSALY.

determined on administering severe punishment on the peccant Tresvisans. The Sotres people started out, and so did the folk from Tresviso to meet them, and it was only by the devoted efforts of the priests of both places that peace was maintained. To this hour, however, the villagers speak disparagingly of each other's cheese.

The legends of the Picos de Europa are not so many as one would incline to believe, but what they are are interesting enough, and some of these we shall give in another chapter. There are, however, some curious modern stories which are connected with Tresviso which will bear repetition, and will come in here in a chapter dealing with the mountaineers, their villages, and their ways.

Thrift of a very decided character, and a certain anxiety to earn an honest penny, are marked features of the mountaineers who brave the winter snows at Tresviso and Sotres. Not so very long ago a well-known and distinguished naturalist, staying some time under the hospitable roof of Don Haime, went out one morning collecting on the mountain-side, accompanied by an elderly Spaniard as a guide. The man of science, seeing a particularly large slug, eagerly took possession, and afterwards carefully put it into a little glass bottle, which he subsequently labelled with some remarks in pencil. The grave Asturian concluded as follows:—"Slugs are scarce and valuable in the country of the Señor Inglese. They are common enough here. Will just mention

this to the señora when I get home. I shall please Don Haime and his friend from across the sea, and put money in my pocket at the same time. I'll get him some of the slugs he values so much." Accordingly, early next morning Mr. Woods was awakened by the arrival of our reflective friend, who was accompanied by his better half carrying a large parcel. Inquiring the cause of the visit, Don Haime was informed that they had got as many as they could, and they reckoned there was about twenty-five pounds weight. If a fair price was given they would bring some more to-morrow. "But *what* have you got?" said the puzzled Englishman. "Slugs, señor;" and the incident of Baron H. and his specimen was related. Mr. Woods burst into a hearty laugh, and did his best to explain how matters stood. The mountaineers were at first indignant, and then crest-fallen, and sorrowfully wended their way back to their home; but they would not carry their valueless burden further. Mr. Woods should have as a present what he would not pay for, so they emptied the contents of their basket over the Englishman's kitchen-garden fence, and it being mainly planted with cabbages, the twenty-five pounds weight of slugs must have had, in American parlance, a "high old time of it." When Mr. Woods saw the wreck of his cabbage garden, he used language as to the results of scientific investigation which seemed strangely sceptical from such educated lips.

We have already referred to the remarkable thrift

of these people, and in many cases must be added to thrift an astuteness which would do credit to a Philadelphia lawyer. A few months ago an old peasant, who was depositing some hard-earned pesetas in a secret rock-crevice in a roadside bank, was rather startled on discovering that he had been observed, or might have been observed, by a neighbour who for some reason or other did not bear the highest character in the village. The depositor returned in a few days, and, as he was half afraid was the case, he found all his cherished money-store of some ten pounds in value had gone, and instinctively he knew that his neighbour, who was hovering about when he last deposited money, must be the thief. The problem was now how to get the ten pounds back again, and this is the way the old gentleman who put his money in the rock set about the business. First of all he sought out the man who he felt certain had stolen his hoard, and told him that he expected in a day or so to receive from a lawyer about fifty pounds. "Now," he added, "any little sums of money that I don't want I have been in the habit of depositing in a secret place only known to myself. The question is now, as I am to have for me a large sum, shall I put it in the old place or trust it to some bank at Santander or notary at Potes?" Visions of a clear haul of fifty pounds rose before the dishonest neighbour, as with manifest sincerity he warned his dear friend on no account to trust to these new-fangled banks and

the like, but stick to the old and trusted place of security. Feeling certain that if the gentleman with expectations found his ten pounds gone he would never put the fifty pounds in the rock, the neighbour placed the ten pounds in the crevice and waited patiently for the big fish. However, this dishonestly meant restitution was discounted by the intended victim, as he removed the ten pounds almost as soon as it was placed there, and has never used the rock-bank since. Whether the fifty pounds he expected was a fictitious sum we do not know; we are inclined to the opinion that it was.

Sometimes the mountaineers carry their love of economy to the verge of what we should certainly consider indecent conduct. Three men were once engaged in carrying the corpse of a peasant woman to Tresviso for interment. Coffins are not known in the remote Cantabrian Highlands, and the deceased was covered by a new sack. In the eyes of the carriers this was downright foolish extravagance, so one of them went and fetched a very old sack that belonged to him, and the body was buried in it. After the interment they tossed up for the new sack.

To those who love the well-kept, flower-bedecked "God's acres" of our village churchyards in England, nothing is more repulsive than the apparent irreverence of the Spaniards for the dead. At Tresviso the little *campo santo* is not a scandal, whereas in many cases that we know of it certainly is. Perhaps the most realistic account of these disgracefully kept

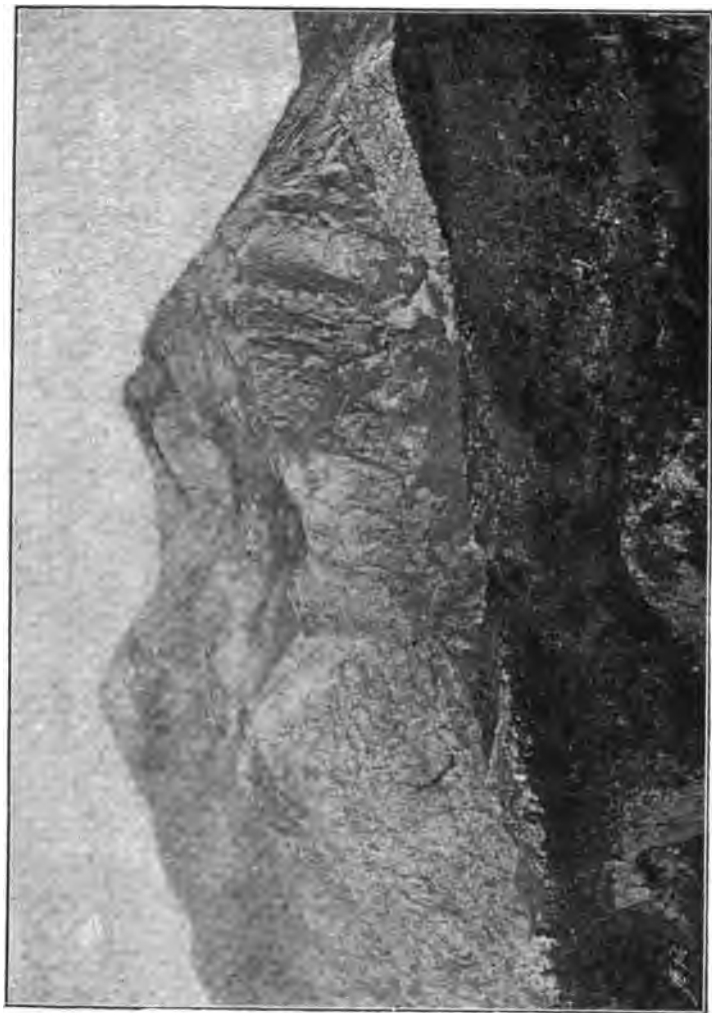
village churchyards is given by a work on 'Southern Spain' by Mr. Rose, who says :—

"Much as I have heard of the beauty of burial grounds abroad, I looked at least for decency and cleanliness. The first thing that struck me, as I opened the gate and took off my hat, was the sickly putrid smell, that well nigh caused me to vomit. Close before me, on a rough hewn and unlettered stone, stood two tiny coffins; the lids, always of glass, were not screwed down. I pushed one aside, and there, beautiful even in death, were the rich tresses and pink cheeks of a child some eight summers. The other was the coffin of an infant. Both bodies were wrapped, as is customary, in coloured silver paper, for the clothes are *burnt* invariably, as they might be a temptation to dishonest persons to exhume the coffin from its shallow grave. Just then I looked down, and lo, the whole of the place was covered with human bones lying on the surface. The evening breeze rose and fell, coming from the distant hills, wafted to my feet—it *clung around* my feet—a light loose mass of long and tangled hair. Stooping down to look, I saw that there was plenty of it about on the gravestones and around the dry thistles which grew in abundance; I had turned and it *clung* to me. There was no grass, no turf, only sand and rocks peeping out. I asked the old gravedigger where he would bury the two little coffins. 'Mañana' (to-morrow), he answered; 'but the place is so full I hardly know where to scrape a hole.'"

Having spent some very pleasant days wandering around the highest Picos, we made for the inn of Urdon, again to continue the road through the mountains of Cantabria to the quaint town of Potes, beyond which place the plains of Central Spain commence.

Going down the mountain path, though it takes naturally much less than the ascent, is not easy work, and care should be taken, as before mentioned, of the loose stones, especially at the corners of the zigzag paths. On the last occasion when we made the descent, and which we did in remarkably quick time, the sudden change from the rarity of the atmosphere in Tresviso to the comparative warmth of Urdon caused in one of us a painful deafness which lasted some hours. Some people are affected differently by the sudden changes. Crossing the Sierra Nevada in America by the railway, we have noticed Spaniards, going out to "prospect" among the vineyards of fair California, bleed from the eyes and nosé as they entered the sunny valleys from the lofty snow-capped heights.

We have said nothing in this chapter as to the sport to be found in the Picos. This will be treated separately later on, when we have visited all the parts of our mountainous citadel and have leisure to think of the bear, the chamois, and the eagle.



A VIEW FROM TRESVISO.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BATHS OF LA HERMIDA.

"TRAVELLERS' tales" do not at Santiago's hostelry get the same measure of incredulity as they do in the untravelled sets of people that we find laying down the laws of the homesick and ignorant in the public rooms of establishments which would laugh to scorn the humble luxuries of our Urdon resting-place. It is true we were somewhat severely cross-examined as to our sporting experiences (of which, as we have said, more anon), but the fact that we had visited as pilgrims and strangers the region of the highest Picos made us somewhat objects of interest, and round the hospitable kitchen fire of our host we had merely to tell to believing audiences truthful stories of life and scenery of which they themselves were most excellent judges.

After a good night's rest we determined on concluding our journey through the citadel of the Picos, as we have christened this mighty formation of limestone, and so reach the Southern Postern Gate near Potes.

Still the self-same level road, still the ever-flowing

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Deva, still the self-same lofty masses of mountainous rock on either side of us. Just after leaving the inn of Urdon the direction is almost directly south, but the road so twists and turns at intervals as to render following the compass a perfect puzzle. A pleasant stroll of about a mile brings one to the village of La Hermida, which is in winter perhaps one of the coldest places in all the fair region of "Sunny Spain." The reason is not far to seek. Owing to the altitude of the still precipitous mountains which on all sides surround the place, the sun in winter rarely shines in La Hermida for more than an hour a day, and during the short December days we have seen the whole population of the place sitting at a well-known local wall, "*por prender el sol*," or in other words to warm their bodies by means of Nature's great stove. There is an inn in this place, but its approaches are not perfect—far from it. In bad weather—and it has been our miserable fate in most cases to visit La Hermida when little or no sun was visible, whereas rain was plentiful—its principal door is reached by recklessly going through a foot or two of black mud, in the manufacture of which the numerous pigs which simply surround the establishment have had their full share. But the pigs have no monopoly of the wretchedly-cared-for inn yard at La Hermida. Horses, mules, and bullocks block up its approaches and the bold traveller who will face the accumulated filth will find, when he enters the dingy bar itself, that the resplendent bottles, all marked with the

labels of Bass, Allsopp, De Kuypers, Hennessy and the rest, are nearly all dummies, like those in the Bristol druggist store of Mr. Sawyer, late "Nockemorf," in 'Pickwick,' and that which the average thirsty soul has to rely on is simply red wine, fortified, however, to suit the local Spanish palate, by the admixture of the imported potato spirit—which, however, finds its way readily enough to the harbours of Bilbao and Santander. If the truth must be told, the average Northern Spaniard infinitely prefers these "doctored" wines, which are always called "Vinos de Castille," to the vintage which we can cordially recommend to all those who are not exactly strict teetotalers, and that is the red pure juice of the grape called Liebana, which has all the delicacy of the finest Bordeaux wines but can hardly boast their depth in colour. This wine is not fortified in any way, and is certainly one of the most delicious drinks in summer-time, especially if the traveller has the caution to ask his friend the landlord to place a quart or so in the cool mountain stream to act as a refrigerator.

Brandy is very scarce except in the coast towns, but hollands or ginebra is the popular spirit; a good deal of *annisette* is also drunk, as also a native spirit called *caña*, which we believe is distilled from maize. One of the sights of La Hermida is the congregation at this remote little place of a most heterogeneous mass of suffering humanity early in the summer, when the little warm weather the place enjoys may be said to begin. On one occasion, when ill-luck compelled

us to stop overnight at the local inn, we were encountered by about twenty men and women, all mountaineers and all clad in the same homespun brown serge. Some were almost carried, some struggled painfully along on crutches; this was in the evening. In the morning perhaps a hundred more had arrived, and all these people were bound for the celebrated hot alkaline springs situated about a mile from La Hermida proper, which has been famous for centuries, and is alleged to cure almost all the ills that flesh is heir to. These springs have now been enclosed, and a really comfortable bathing establishment has been erected.

The popularity of Nature's warm baths in Spain is something extraordinary. During all the summer months there is always a rush going on to some place or other, and the cures one hears of remind one of those long advertisements of patent medicines in which one fully expects to read that some one, years after death, has been restored to a renewed and vigorous existence by the application of Messrs. So-and-So's ointment. We have our own theory about this mania for warm baths. We give it for what it is worth, and perhaps the action of its scope should be, strictly speaking, confined to the Cantabrian mountains—it *may*, however, for all that, be true of the whole peninsula. In our opinion the average Spaniard, especially in mountain regions, seldom if ever washes himself all over. The virtues of Terebene soap have had no attractions for him, and

he could with truth give that famous testimonial which appeared some time since, that "ten years before he used Messrs. Cleavers' soap, and since then he has used *no other*." As a natural consequence, in a climate like that of Northern Spain, he soon falls a victim to rheumatism, lumbago and the like; but going to these baths and bathing "all over," as the phrase goes, in medicated water at a temperature which perhaps was never known to him before, he soon becomes a different and a healthier man. His pores have been opened and his frame invigorated by the unwonted wash. The merits of that superb institution, the morning tub, combined with Terebene, have yet to be discovered in Spain.

A few yards from the baths of La Hermida is the very centre of the Picos, the heart of the magnificent upheaval of limestone rock which is the distinguishing feature of the long line of the Highlands of Cantabria. And just at this spot we find a curiosity which no doubt greater geologists than ourselves can explain. La Hermida is really about a mile on the southern slope of the Picos de Europa, and, as said over and over again, here the compounds of calcium attain an altitude of thousands of feet, but in their way home, so to speak, and poised at an angle of forty-five, and called the Red Mountain, is a deposit of red sandstone to be traced by the naked eye to the very base of the baths of La Hermida. The highest deposit of this red sandstone seems to have a breadth of quite a hundred yards, and here it is that the

pine, which is noticeable by its absence from the Picos, seems to have found its home. As a matter of fact, at the baths of La Hermida, and owing doubtless to this different stratification, the mountains are more open and the sun has more power. Small forests of chestnut and walnut trees give a charm to the gloomy appearance of the great gorges previously described.

The traveller, however, is barely through this pretty little break, and passed the civilization sign of a square-built hotel and bathing establishment, before the road he has got to travel by dives into deeper and deeper gorges, and the thin white *camino* and the glistening river seem, as the eye wanders forward, to be lost in the precipices of rock that hem them in on all sides. It is just about here that, perched on quaint-looking ledges at great height, a few trees seem to flourish. On all sides are deep-cut caverns and watercourses, while the wildness and desolation of the place are sublime in their majesty. No wonder, indeed, that the Moors never reached anywhere near the centre of the Picos de Europa. The citadel of our fortress is unconquered and unconquerable.

We have a lurking suspicion that some of our readers are wondering where the brigands come in, and in effect they are saying: What's the use of travelling in Spain, especially in the wildest parts of an almost unknown province, if there is no fighting or disturbances with bandits and the like? Ladies

and gentlemen, for your sakes we are sorry there are no brigands to write about, and the long twenty-mile pass of the Picos de Europa is safer for the pedestrian than any road in England, and infinitely more so than, say, the crossing from King William's statue to the corner which leads to the "Shades" in Martin's Lane or some other fast-cab-ridden locality. Through the pass we have been describing, no one ever goes, except the coach driven twice a day, or perhaps half-a-dozen stray market people in the twenty-four hours.

One dark evening in winter, while going along through this grandly weird gorge, we were met by two of the famous Civil Guard of Spain, who, after an interchange of civilities, and an inspection of our licences for carrying arms, our weapons being on our shoulders, went on their way to La Hermida. The following is a good account of the constitution of this force:—

The Civil Guards of Spain are composed of 20,000 Foot and 5000 Horse Guards, or Gendarmerie, first organised 1844–45. They are dressed in dark blue tunic and trousers of same colour, light buff-coloured belts, and armed with Remington rifles; some have the short, some the long rifle.

The Guardias Civiles are under military law; their punishments and penalties exceptionally severe, but their *esprit de corps* is remarkably good.

Their ranks are composed of the high-character and long-service men of the Spanish army; and of

cadets from the College, near Madrid, where all the orphan children of Civil Guards who have died in the pursuance of their duty are educated, free of expense, for the force.

The duties of the Civil Guards are much the same as those of the Royal Irish Constabulary, whom they greatly resemble in organisation.

They are stationed, in couples, in every town and small village, and in small barracks along every frequented high-road, and in squads of from twenty-five to fifty in Spain's larger cities. They are police, without being spies; soldiers, without being liable to be called on for service beyond the peninsula. They perform their duties as police most effectively. Not a robbery is committed but what these men find out, and, thanks only to their exertions, Spain is now well-nigh free of robbers. Two of them meet every train at every station, examine passports with courtesy, check everything that is wrong, as well by their presence and *morale*, as by the strong arm of the law. They escort prisoners from one prison to another, and, knowing how uncertain in its action is Spanish law, they constantly shoot down a murderer, taken red-handed, or trying to escape when on the march with them from prison to prison. They have certainly done more to establish order in Spain than any other body. The men are 5 feet 8 inches in stature, well-set and powerful. Their head is a General in the army, living in Madrid, with the title of Director-General. Their officers are nearly all of the middle

class, say, of the class of tradesmen. All members of the force must read and write. Promotion from the ranks is the rule, not the exception. They live in barracks, mess together, and associate but little with the outer world.

The force supports a weekly periodical, called *Boletín oficial de La Guardia Civil*, first started in 1858. The rules of the corps are arranged in the *Cartilla*, gambling being entirely prohibited. "The couples engaged in patrolling the roads must walk twelve paces apart from one another, so as not to be both surprised at once." The rules for protection of persons and property prescribe the proper conduct for every emergency, such as earthquakes, fires, floods, wayfarer losing his way, and so on, duly laid down. The cavalry carry heavy dragoon swords of Toledo make, and revolvers and short carbine; the foot-soldiers—for soldiers they are, but trained to act in couples as well as in large bodies,—Remington rifle and bayonet, and sometimes revolvers. The safety of property in Spain may, without exaggeration, be said to depend on this most excellent force. No Civil Guard is allowed to accept a reward, however great be his service to you.

The scrupulous cleanliness of these splendid troops is something astonishing; every man looks the truth, that he is a gentleman; but he seems to have just washed his eyes, face, and neck, and pared his nails, and his uniform and accoutrements seem to have been just served out to him. The uniform of the

Civil Guards is as described, but the cloth gaiters they wear as high as the knee, and the cocked hat, worn à la Napoléon athwart the head and not fore and aft, so to speak, gives a rather theatrical and picturesque look to the men. The graceful way in which the Guardia Civile will "cloak" in bad weather, would drive poor Tommy Atkins or even Pat of the R. I. C. almost mad with envy. The Royal Irish Constabulary is the finest body of armed men in the service of the Queen, but with all our national prejudices, we think they would have to take a seat in row No. 2, as compared with the Spanish Civil Guards. All other gendarmerie forces are, so to speak, not in the race with the two bodies just referred to.

The wood after the Red Mountain is passed traverses similar gorges to those described. Not a habitation is to be seen, and the river is crossed twice, the *camino real* taking nearly always the right bank of the river. About two miles or more from the baths at La Hermida, a rushing torrent empties itself into the Deva, crossed by a very substantial bridge ; and here we would recommend the traveller to take the mountain path to the right of it, and spend at least half an hour or so in exploring it upwards. The pathway is similar to that of Tresviso, very narrow and steep, but it is nicer mountain climbing than that just named, inasmuch as the music of the mountain stream far away down at his feet is pleasant to listen to.



THE RED MOUNTAIN.

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After heavy rains this feeder of the Deva is boisterously noisy in its falls from rock to rock. Now it will lose itself in the numerous dark caverns which honeycomb its rocky bed, but out it will emerge again, and fall with fury some twenty feet below. Above are timbered and cragged peaks, and the valley of this little stream is really very beautiful. The big fall is higher up the mountain-side after the traveller has passed the strata of red deposit. Those to whom time is no particular object should, either going or returning through the Picos, leave the main road at the baths of La Hermida to traverse the whole of the upper fertile country, the oasis of the Red Mountain, and return through the dense chestnut forest which overhangs the cascade we have just referred to. A lady or gentleman could easily make this detour in a few hours and without fatigue, and no guide is required. All that the pedestrian has to do is to follow the path; it starts from and returns to the main road. Many of the quaint old villages which dot here and there the mountain-side are well worth a visit, but one never sees young men about—they have all gone soldiering. A few charcoal-burners' huts are now to be seen, and one can easily contemplate the whole process—the cutting the trees from the precipitous heights of the gloomy gorge-side, and the stacking and burning of the timber. These men's remuneration for their labour is miserably small, at any rate to our notions, but they seemed happy enough. In the upper portions of the craggy

sides of this part of the long winding road from Unquera to Potes are innumerable caves and crannies which have never been trodden by the foot of man. We are inclined to the opinion that the ascent to some of these caves would puzzle the cleverest member of the Alpine Club. We have told the mountainers where they are. After inspection of the precipice it is for them to say if it is worth while risking their necks over the business. We like the look from the road much better. With a few mechanical appliances, however, we have no doubt all difficulties would be speedily overcome.

One of the wildest gorges of the Picos is coming to a conclusion, and the green valley of Liebana is almost within sight. Though mostly of the stern order, the first impressions of the Picos will never fade from our recollection. Those who know what it is to love scenery and to adore the Creator of Nature for the blessings conferred on men by its existence, will readily understand that more than once in the quiet of one of the long passes we have broken out into

Te Deum laudamus : te Dominum confitemur.

The crags, the waterfalls, the sunshine and the flowers, all spoke to us in their unerring language—
Rejoice, for our beauty is for you!

CHAPTER XV.

THE VALE OF LIEBANA.

CONTINUING our journey through the gorges of Urdon and La Hermida, with mountains still towering above us, almost at a turn of the road we meet the southern sun in all its glory and its warmth, bursting through a grand opening between two immense Picos, probably inaccessible. These, owing to their peculiar position to the south and the beautiful valley we are now about to describe, take an exactly similar position, in the idea we have formed, to our Main Gate at Panes ; and our Vale of Liebana, which now opens up and continues for several miles, is a smiling southern entrance into our castle from that direction. Llebana, or Liebana, as we believe it is more correctly spelt in Spanish, is a most lovely mountain-enclosed valley, shelving gently upwards to the east with innumerable vineyards, and fields of the richest cultivation. Here, although we are still following the course of the Deva, Nature seems to have created a nest, almost a sun-trap, where the snows of the upper regions are never known and the people differ entirely from the

hardy mountaineers whom we have described previously, both in costume, manners, and education. We have noticed in many of our travels that where the vine grows in luxuriance the people seem more happy and contented, and this first picture of tier upon tier of cultivation bears out the theory, for a more prosperous, happy and contented village than Liebana, cosily reposing on a sloping alluvial soil, we have seldom seen. Evidently the "monks of old" had their eye to this "Happy Valley," for the church shown in our photograph is, according to local tradition, the oldest of the very old ones seen in the Picos, and has a repute for antiquity throughout the country. It is seldom visited now, as the modern road is on the opposite site of the river, and the traveller who about twenty years ago from the mule track glanced at its weather-beaten battlements, and perhaps stayed at its now forgotten inn, passes some miles on the other side and has more modern accommodation at the new wayside Posada. We stayed here once on an exploring expedition for mines, and penetrated a valley to the west directly at the foot of the highest of these grand mountains, which, being nearly unknown except to the villagers, well repaid a few hours of quiet walking not fatiguing in any particular degree. We had been shown a mineral which we at first thought to be borax, and had traced it to Liebana and afterwards to the valley beyond; and hungering after a good bit, got hold of a peasant resident, whom we asked to show us



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the mine but in no case divulge on what errand we were bent, for Spaniards (even poor people having made grand fortunes out of casual discoveries) are always on the alert, and the first declarers of mineral deposits in Spain have their rights, be they lords or peasants. Englishmen going away from the main road are therefore the subject of village gossip, and we told our guide to be most cautious and say nothing as to our business. For this purpose we passed through the village at early dawn, but, sad to relate, our guide was as deaf as a post, and, like most deaf people, thought we could not hear him also. The result was that he shouted out answers to questions most discreetly put as near his ear as possible, and aroused the villagers and caused a barking concert of their guardian dogs. Fortunately and unfortunately the find turned out to be nothing but gypsum, but in a most beautifully crystallised state—fortunately, for we are sure the Spaniards would have been before us in the declaration; and unfortunately, because we had a day's journey for little, we were about to say nothing; but really a more charming grass-grown valley on the southern slope of the Picos does not exist. Had this spot turned out the El Dorado we had pictured to ourselves and a residence required, we should have selected a site in a large forest of olive trees with a cool limpid stream running through it, the glorious Picos in front, and for miles through the openings in the forest, views of naught else but of uncultivated green

grass, kept verdant for cattle and sheep. There are said to be indications of copper near here, and if they should be explored by any mining engineer sent out we can recommend him, if a lover of Nature's greatest gifts, a lovely climate, grand scenic effects of mountain and woodland; and probably from its being away from the main road, the cheapest and most comfortable dwelling-place in Europe, and yet not many miles from Panes and Potes, both market centres for comparative luxuries. Coming back to Liebana and its inn, a few yards from which our photograph was taken, we would ask the traveller to cross the bridge over the river and when on the other side, if he wishes to hear all the folk-lore of the place, to inquire for "Lothario"—we call him the gay "Lothario," but he is not this, he is essentially practical, and comparatively well to do—and from his house (where he will give you a good glass of the local claret much esteemed in the country), through a window four feet by two, you can peep at as pretty a landscape as any artist could desire. On one occasion at this inn we were witness to a sight which, amusing as it was, we would rather not have seen. At the door was a mule saddled and harnessed and the country people round laughing in a boisterous fashion. It seems that the priest of a neighbouring village was attempting to mount, and after attaining the back of the animal, found he could not balance, and after several failures he went inside and took another glass of spirit, and then fairly gave

the matter up, and before us all went on his knees and prayed for assistance, which so strengthened him that with our assistance we got him safely on his mule, and for aught we know he arrived home all right. The wanderer near this valley will notice cut through by the road a large and very dark deposit, an upheaval of what at first sight might be mistaken for coal or anthracite, and we think the wealth-seeker with sufficient knowledge of his subject might well stay a few days exploring the neighbourhood. According to our theory, the Picos having shot themselves upwards through what must have been level ground, the upheaval of all strata from Liebana for miles southwards slips downwards with its various surface-outcrops at an angle of thirty or forty-five degrees. The climate now is totally different to that of Unquera or the mountain passes; it is here, and as we proceed south, "Sunny Spain" in truth. In fact a more varied panorama of scenery can scarcely be imagined than that which comes before the eyes of the traveller from the shores of Biscay in the few hours of coach transit to this charming vale of Liebana.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE OLD MAN OF CASTRO.

Not far from where the gorge of the Picos de Europa terminates for the level lands that lie on either bank of the Deva, as the traveller approaches the little town of Potes, is a strange sentinel rock called by the natives the Old Man of Castro. This monument of stone is certainly a marked feature in the rocky landscape, and the keen-visaged tourist will notice that the eyes of the "old man" (they do not in the Asturias affix the grand) look both ways, up the gorge as you go north, and towards Potes as you leave that unspoilt town. A typical English Liberal would politically and "poetically" illustrate this peculiarity, perhaps in the following crude fashion :

Poor race of Tories, say pitying critics,
Dearly ye pay for your Churchill fall ;
Some traces of Dizzy ye still inherit,
But the eye of the G. O. M.'s over you all.

According to Potes tradition—and we give the statement, like the St. Louis editor when he said that a quondam Governor of Missouri had been seen perfectly sober at six P.M., "for what it may be worth"—the

old man of Castro was a Gothic outpost, who, not being removed, froze to his post, and was converted into stone. Another reliable fiction is that he was an *octroi* officer of Potes, but the evidence in support of these stories is very unsatisfactory, and the unsuspecting traveller should not be too trusting in their regard. Unlike his British prototype, the grand old man of the Picos will say nothing about himself even if interrogated by postcard; and we are simply unable to make head or tail of the hundred and one stories which the mountaineers tell as to the cause of his preternatural fondness for office at the top of the Asturian height.

One evening in the Café Suizo at Santander we were laughingly recounting these stories of the Cantabrian G. O. M. to an American citizen well known at the "Savage" and not unacquainted with the declivity of Martin's Lane in the "City." Much to our astonishment he called for pen and paper, exclaimed "I have it," and in less than ten minutes penned the following extraordinary solution of the great natural phenomenon of the Southern Postern Gate.

LEGEND OF THE OLD MAN OF CASTRO.

Once there was a pious lady,
In the good old days of yore;
Thin she was, and weird and trusting,
But the legend says no more.

'Cept her son was lost quite early,
Voyaging o'er many a sea;
Then, no cablegram nor postses
Could supply the news to she.

After many years had flowed,
And she mournèd him as dead,
Great the cry was that he *toward*
Spania's shores in speed he sped.

But we talk of thousand yeares,
This the time of which we took,
Long before the Megatherium
Was converted into rock.

Mother Eve and Adam scarcely
Had their errant course begun,
When this mother mourned in silence
For her wand'ring truant son.

Great advertisements were styloed
On the local Pap'rus sheet,
And the agony she piload,
Son to see and son to meet.

As the Dame was very wealthy,
And the world was very poor,
Many claimants *naturally*
Knocked often at her door.

Till at last, in crazy moment,
She took oathes by the ton,
That the next who made appearance,
Coûte que coûte, should be her son.

Then there came a great misfortun
To the widow's tender breast,
Man turned up with name of Ortun,
And by her was slick caressed.

But the laws for lunaticics,
Were by patriarches framed,
And the Claimant found that he must
Bide by them or be déclaimed.

He must prove by fortitudy,
All in spite of village groan,
That for several hundred yeares,
On a mount he'd stand alone.

These harsh rulings clash quite strangely
In these days of life fourscore,
But the patriarches cared not
For a hundred years or more.

He was strong, and he was hearty,
And he bowed unto the law ;
And upon the mountain ranges
He commenced his great "labor."

There he was and there he is now,
His large sinnes to atone ;
Providency has been kind, tho',
And converted him to stone.

There he stands, an illustration
Of the mortal sin of grip.
Those that try for most won't get it,
Fortune is so cussed slip.

* * * *

Bo'san Chucky, we remember,
In that "Easy Middy" book,
Said, all things were reproduced,
Howe'er long the time it took.

He a Maltese donkey strode once,
Cheerily the course alon ;
And he said he'd done the same thing,
On the gallant Mastodon.

Can it be this legend ancient,
Of this old man turned to stone,
Is repeated at this moment
In substantial skin and bone.

We're translators and not poets,
This you scarcely need be told,
And can only ask the question,
Do the Moderns ape the old?

Has there not been oldish lady
Claimant, trial, treading mill,
Fortitudy display~~ed~~,
Near the point called Portland Bill.

We'll now end a strange desastro.
Give a problem to our sages;
"How is it the name of Castro
Has remained so many ages?"

CHAPTER XVII.

AN UNSPOILT SPANISH TOWN.

POTES, the quaint little highland capital, is generally put a few miles out of its proper place in most of the maps of Spain that we have come across. Sometimes the unhappy town is represented as being north, other times south, east, and sometimes in the middle of the Picos. Hachette's guide to Spain does not even mention the Picos at all; but that is no excuse for putting Potes in the map where Panes really is. But the French have not learned even now the lesson of 1870, and are almost as careless as ever in their maps and geographical detail.

Four delightful valleys conjoin at Potes—those of Del Prado, Val de Baro, Creceda, and Cellorigo. The town itself is situated on a hill commanding the road to the Picos in a northerly direction, and that which leads to the low range of hills that keeps in from sight the Central Spanish plain. The Deva is crossed by a good bridge just outside the town, and you are soon in the market-place of the metropolis of the Picos de Europa. Potes is well described by us in the heading of this chapter. It is

unspoilt. Santander, Bilbao, in fact, and all the larger and most of the smaller northern Spanish towns, all show decided marks of the influence of the British and the French. Not so Potes. It is highland Spanish, and, with perhaps the exception of the daily mail by the coach, is exactly the same as it was centuries ago. The pavements, the houses, the church, and the shops, all are marked with an indefinable hatred of anything new-fangled. Whatever may suit flashy places like Santander or Palencia will not do for Potes. In the matter of resistance to change Potes is adamant. Many of our readers will know the following story, and, in our opinion, the grand old gardener had got Potes in his mind when he referred to the land of sunny Spain :—

On dit assez plaisamment qu'il y a quelques années qu'Adam revint au monde, et qu'en faisant le tour de l'Europe, il la trouva tellement changée, qu'après avoir parcouru la France, l'Angleterre, la Hollande, l'Allemagne, etc., il ne les reconnut pas ; mais qu'en arrivant en Espagne, il s'écria tout haut, ha ! pour ce pays-ci, je le reconnois, car on n'y a rien changé depuis mon départ." Many of the houses are of the Moorish type of architecture, and the longish little street of shops in a kind of colonnade suggests the Eastern city. The old wine-shops, with their counters in the streets, are exactly the same as those found at Pompeii. The market-place is as Roman as it is possible to be, while a lofty square Moorish tower shows

how very near the bold Saracens got to the citadel home of the unconquered mountaineers. The church at Potes is utterly uninteresting, and, though clean and well kept, would be all the better for a little more ornamentation. In connection with this church it may be said that close to it a new one has been built, and, we were informed, at the sole expense of one man who is since dead. For some reason or other this church is not used, and mass is daily said in the parish church. We tried in vain to find out the reason for this extraordinary neglect of a substantial building. Something was said to us about "a wicked man" who had something to do with the business; but whether the person who found the money to build the church was a "wicked man," or whether reference was being made to that opening verse of the Anglican service we cannot say. All we know is that a fine church is going to ruin in Potes. What a chance for barracks for the Cantabrian division of the Salvation Army!

The views of the surrounding country from any part of the little town are very fine. The southern postern gate of the Picos looks down on the gazer if he turns to the north, while green undulating hills, here and there densely wooded, are seen in every other direction. Murray says there are two or three inns, but we know only of one where we can recommend our reader to stop. It is a quaint tumble-down old stone mansion with a huge coat of arms blazoned on its front. It is on the right hand

side of the main street going south, and cannot be mistaken. Here the traveller will find plenty of plain good food, clean beds, and good attendance, for a very moderate sum. As usual, the landlord of the hotel of the Celestial Fields—(oh! the mud of Potes streets—no wonder its inhabitants long for an eternity of daisies)—we forget the worthy landlord's name—keeps a general store in addition to his hotel business, and judging from the number of young *porcos* about the yard, at the side of the house, is no mean pig breeder. Potes is the head-quarters of the finest trout fishing rivers in all Spain—the sport in the rivers Nausa and Sal as well as the Deva being splendid. For breakfast and dinner one always had a freshly caught salmon-trout or trout proper, and they were always welcomed after the soup and first joint or entrée—we publicly state that we rather like the fish coming more or less in the centre of the meal as it is in Spain, for it acts as a tonic in much the same fashion as the *jambon en champagne* at those modest little dinners one gets at the Merchant Taylors. During one of our stays at Potes at the hotel mentioned, we were partly amused and partly annoyed by the strange antics of an unquestionably intoxicated photographer who had been sent by his enterprising but somewhat confiding employer to visit the wilds of the Picos and get the inhabitants to have their likenesses taken. Our newly-found acquaintance was at times very noisy and demonstrative, but it

must be admitted that he made us laugh when he said with unaffected gravity, as far, that is to say, as his condition would allow him, that "it was no earthly good coming to such a place as Potes—the people who stood still were too poor to be photographed, and those who had the money would not be quiet a second. He would give the whole thing up and return to Santander." While he was rambling on in this fashion one of the party in the large common room suggested that it was a great pity no one had a stork's egg with him, as that would soon cure his intoxication and would make him a fit member of society.

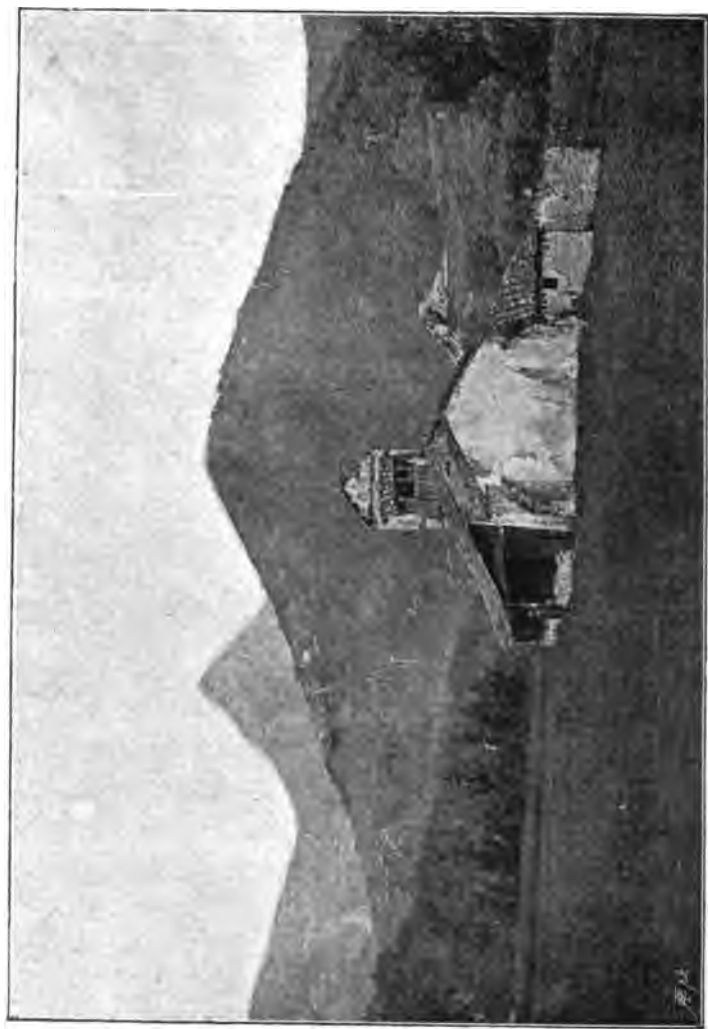
This strange idea is certainly commonly prevalent in Northern Spain, and, it seems, also obtains in the south, as in the *Field* some few weeks ago we came across the following passage:—

"As I was walking through the *Plaza del Mercado*, a market-place in Seville, with Manuel, an old fruit-seller asked him : . . . to get her a stork's egg for her son . . . There came a bargain, and finally the old lady agreed to give ten reals, an enormous price for her, and for such an article. When we had got out of earshot, Manuel informed me that her son was that very rare thing in Spain, an habitual drunkard, and it is the popular belief that a stork's egg is a certain cure for this unfortunate habit."

In reference to this we may add that "Swan says in his *Speculum Manchi*, that "the eggs of an owl broken and put into the cup of a drunkard, or one

desirous to follow drinking, will so work with him that he will suddenly loathe his good liquor and be displeased with drinking." It is a pity that this simple receipt is not better known amongst the Good Templars and teetotalers generally, as the introduction of owls' eggs at our banquets instead of plovers', which are said to be too often crows' eggs, might powerfully contribute to the sobriety of our native boards, and thus easily attain the object so earnestly desired.

While we were cross-examining our fellow guest as to what he knew practically of the events of storks' eggs in cases of very severe devotion to J.D.K.Z. or "Three star," a bat flew across the room and quickly made for an open window. Since the time that the Moorish hosts fled before the all-conquering hundreds that were the phalanx of Pelayo, we do not think Potes ever saw such a stampede for the door. The two phlegmatic Britons were the only persons who seemed to retain their *sang-froid*. Bats are detested by the average Asturian, and on no account would one of the party return to the room where the cheiroptera had been flying until in fact it was broad daylight. One of us in reference to this childish superstition made some ghastly joke that the exiled native "had gone out with his bat," and we adjourned to the roomy kitchen where round the wood fire we soon got up a conversation on the folk-lore of the neighbourhood. We heard a good many stories—the majority of which



A CANTABRIAN SHRINE.

had a strong religious flavour. We do not wish to tire our readers with more than two, for enough of a thing's enough. The strong faith that was depicted on the bronzed face of the narrator, as he sonorously told the following by the flickering light of the kitchen fire, was well worth the study of a Rembrandt for a Cantabrian interior:—

Once upon a time, the devil, in his wicked rounds, came to a village very near to Potes, but up in the mountains where a pastoral simplicity of manner prevailed, and, by his seducing arts, speedily entrapped the villagers into all manner of evil. But the monks proved too much for Satan, and got him under their thumb, compelled him to put on the habit of their order, and to preach so powerfully that the straying sheep were all brought back to the fold again.

Other “yarns,” as we should call them in the great South Sea, followed in quick succession—one or two of them being of a class which cannot well be introduced here. The story pendulum swung from grave to gay, from lively to severe, and so it was that just after a decidedly realistic anecdote one of the fire-worshippers at Potes burst on us with the following, which we give in a literal kind of fashion:—

Once upon a time, when Jesus Christ was going with His disciples to Jerusalem, He met an old man, and asked alms of Him. The old man said to Him:

“I am only an old soldier, and they sent me away from the army with only two sous, because I am no

longer good for anything. I have already given away one sou on the road; I have only one left, and I give that to you."

Then our Lord says to him, "Which would you prefer, a sack of gold or Paradise?"

St. Peter gently nudges the old man in the ribs, "Say Paradise!"

"What! Paradise!" says the old soldier. "Afterwards we shall have Paradise as well. I prefer a sack of gold."

And our Lord gives him the sack of gold, and He said as He gave it to him:

"When this sack is empty it will be sufficient to say, "*Artchila murtchila!* go into my sack!" and everything you wish will go into the sack!"

Our man takes the sack and goes on his road. When he had gone a little way he passed before the door of an inn and sees a leg of mutton on the table. He was hungry, and, opening his sack, he said:

"*Artchila murtchila!* Fine leg of mutton, come into my sack."

In an instant it was in it, and in the same way he had everything he wished for.

One day the devil came to tempt this old man; but, as soon as he heard him, he opened his sack and said:

"*Artchila murtchila!* go into my sack!"

And the devil himself entered into the sack. He takes the sack with the devil in it to a blacksmith, and, for a long time and very vigorously he pounded it with his sledge-hammer.

When the old man died he went to Paradise. When he arrived there, St. Peter appears and says to him :

“ Why are you standing there—and what are you asking for ? ”

“ Paradise.”

“ What! Paradise! Did not you prefer to have a sack of gold when God gave you the choice? Be off from here. Be off to hell. There are the gates—there!”

Our old man, in deepest sadness, goes to the door of hell, and knocks; but, as soon as the door was opened, the devil recognised the soldier and began to cry out :

“ Don’t let him come in; don’t let him come in! He will cause us too much trouble and too many misfortunes. He is so very vicious!”

And he would not receive him; he returned again to Paradise, and God commanded St. Peter to let this man enter who had been such a foe to the devil.

Shortly after this story of the old soldier we sought sleep, and were only awakened about three A.M. by the advent of the photographer and some newly-found friends of his, who in endeavouring to clamber up the stairway of our hostelry made noise enough in all conscience.

The next morning we determined to return by the “coach” to Urdon. The vehicle was to start at nine, and of course was not visible at that hour, so having packed up our trifling impedimenta we lounged about the town. Not far from the door of our hotel, in a vacant yard, with a kind of asphalt pavement,

we found some bright-eyed, fair-haired little lads, playing at "fives." Before we hardly knew what we were doing we were with them in the game; and when looking up the street some time after we had actually seen the diligence out of its house, (no horses were visible); we had some little difficulty in tearing ourselves away from our engaging young companions. "The señors Ingleses could easily go by to-morrow's coach. Why not play to-day and travel *mañana*?"

Everything, says the French proverb, comes to him who waits; and so it was that a little before eleven the three horses were harnessed to the "Royal Mail" penny omnibus, and the authors of the "Highlands of Cantabria" took their places under the coupé, to the left of the driver, who occupied the right seat. The coach was full "inside," and there were several outside passengers, including the now comparatively sober photographer, who had, by the way, shrewdly passed off some of his heavy baggage as *ours*, thus avoiding payment for excessive weight, which he would, travelling *solus*, otherwise have had to disburse.

The usual more or less gaping crowd, the usual *adios*, the usual parting messages to friends at Santander or Llanes—the driver cracked his whip and off went our three gallant steeds at a fair pace down the cobble-paved high street, and, having crossed the bridge over the Deva, came to a dead halt at a *taberna* on the right bank of that pleasant little river.

The author with the longer name was between the driver and his friend, and, being comparatively new to Potes and its habits, asked his more experienced fellow-traveller, "What in the name of goodness were they stopping for here?"—the here, being in fact five minutes' easy walk from the "Hotel of the Celestial Fields"—"It looks very much like a drink and a gossip," was the reply. Then the driver threw the reins across the splash-board, and descending leisurely entered the wine-shop, the inside passengers, with the exception of a beautiful *señorita*, all followed suit, and the photographer and his companions on the roof clambered down and did ditto. Five minutes, seven minutes passed, and no sign of forward motion. "I can't stand this any longer," said the son of the War God. "I'll join the crowd." His feet had no sooner touched the ground than off started the three horses at a furious pace, up hill, bringing behind them, in addition to the coach, His Majesty's mails, the fair-haired *señorita* and the unhappy English questioner as to the reason for the detention at the road-side inn. Shouting was no good. The crowd at the *taberna* was left far behind; to the left of the fiery untamed trio was a low wall and a forty-feet drop to the Deva below; to the right was a stone fence and some maize fields. Hastily getting hold of the reins, the British pioneer of the Picos tried his level best, but all to no avail. Two of the horses seemed amenable to reason, but the third—he was

for liberty or death. Things were looking preternaturally ugly as the off steed on the left was carefully making for the precipice, when from a track on the right came out a maize-cart, drawn by a team of sturdy bullocks, right across the path. The peasant in charge saw the situation, and so backed his cart that the runaways with the mail went straight for the wooden wall he presented instead of the bullocks. There *was* a collision—but comparatively speaking a small one. At the critical moment the Briton jumped off and at once went to the assistance of the young lady in the coach, who was wisely lying on the floor of the vehicle, a little shaken, but neither frightened nor hurt. As served him right, the horse that would not pull up suffered the worst. Some slight damage was done to the coach itself, and the wine-drinking crowd having assembled in rear of the runaways, a sort of triumphant procession was formed back of course to the *taberna*. The laughter at the whole affair was loud and long. It was a good thing for nearly everybody. Señor A. would have a job to attend to the wounded horse. Señor B. would have to repair the coach. More *copitas* of *vino tinto* and *ginebra* would be drank at Señor C.'s wine shop. While everybody would have time to have a pleasant chat and rejoice the accident was no worse. The only people who were to be pitied were the unhappy *señorita* and the Señor Inglesé. It was a runaway-match of course in a double sense. The clumsy fellow with his bullock

cart stopped all the romance (the interested author is devoutly grateful that he did); and if the coach will be four hours or so late to-day, who will be the worse? And so on, and so on. The really pretty girl in her black mantilla looked half-disconcerted, half-amused at the *badinage*. The Englishman said that if there had been four horses now, he would have easily known how to have handled them; it was the three that puzzled him. Everybody enjoyed the fun—the “administration” paid for the damages, the people for their drinks; and after a further delay of two hours we started once more on our way, and without further incident, except the mad freaks of the by this time very tipsy photographer, reached the inn kept by Santiago at Urdon.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HOME OF THE CHAMOIS.

It is an old but a very true saying that one ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory, therefore without boring the reader with a long dissertation on the existence of chamois in the Picos and a careful but maddening treatise on the manners and customs of that animal, we will just plunge *in medias res* and give a detailed account of an expedition in which we took a small part towards the end of August last year. Mr. Harrison, the United States Consul at Santander, has been good enough to give us a full account of the expedition, and in this chapter we largely quote from him as he saw much more of the hunt than we did. Accompanied by Don Seven del Diestro, we left Santander, and at Unquera we met one of Señor Diestro's Picos mining captains and arranged with him for supplies, provisions, bedding, for the last station at which we should put up. At the first one, that of Aliva, we were amply provided for by our friend Don Benuquo Arce, the manager and principal proprietor of the most extensive and valuable groups of calamine mines in the Picos, and whose head quarters at Andara we were bound first



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for, to join some other friends who had been invited to meet us.

We left Unquera about 6 P.M. in a nondescript kind of machine, and soon reached Panes. At the admirable little inn kept by Manuel Gomez quite a host of local notables were assembled—the fame of Señor Diestro as a sportsman, quite apart from his high social position, is well known to all Northern Spain. Mr. Pontifex Woods had arrived from Tresviso, and also the village priest and doctor, the local chemist, and a wealthy “Indiano” (the equivalent, in a smaller sense, to our Nabob). Quite a pleasant evening was spent with all these good people. Stories of hunting adventures in the Picos, all more or less flavoured à la Munchausen, and in the application of this sauce our friends the Spaniards are adepts, and held their own fairly even against one or two Englishmen of the party who even in the competitive examination for exaggeration waved high the meteor flag of Britain. Towards bed-time the sporting falsifications grew positively alarming, and reminded us of the old Scottish farmer who, hearing a friend say that he had shot a thirty-four-feet-long tiger, shortly afterwards quietly remarked that not long ago he had caught a skate about an acre in extent. He with the long tiger demurred to the veracity of the exact size of the fish, whereupon the agriculturist retorted, “If you’ll take a few feet off your tiger, I’ll see what can be done with my skate.” Agreeing in a dreamy saddened fashion to the grave proposition that in

some parts of the Picos bears were much more plentiful than dogs in Madrid, we retired to rest, and the vision of a gigantic chamois haunted our couch during that night. Next day we went up to Tresviso and passed the night at Mr. Pontifex Woods', who was as hospitable and kind as usual.

The next morning we made for Andara, which was considerably out of the way, and here we found another well-known local sportsman, Don Luis Bustamante, Don Andres Bustamante, a son of the Conde de Moriana, and the son of our host Señor Arce. A splendid dinner was ready for us, a meal that would have done credit to the Maisons Bignon or Riche. The intense wildness of the surroundings and the luxuries on the table were a perfect contrast, and a placid content was engendered by sundry *copitas* of curaçao, Benedictine and other liqueurs after the meal was over. Where host Arce gets those cigars of his we do not know, but the flavour of his Caracolillo will not be forgotten in a hurry by us. Now that it seems only yesterday that poor Colonel Burnaby died so gloriously in the Soudan, it is strange to recount the fact that during this famous dinner we heard Andres Bustamante recount to Mr. Harrison various of his shooting experiences with Colonel Burnaby in Spain. The enthusiasm of the gallant Spaniard for the noble fellow who was speared in the African desert was unmistakable.

After a decent interval for digestion we started for Aliva which, as before stated, was the head-

quarters of our first hunt. Mr. Harrison went alone on horseback from Tresviso to Andara, and his account of the proceedings of a certain horse lent to him by Mr. Woods is very amusing. It seems that almost as soon as he was crossed, the animal showed unmistakable symptoms of a desire to return home. First he tried standing still, but seeing that this suited not the views of his rider about reaching Andara in time for dinner, a little obstinacy on Mr. Harrison's part overcame this. Shortly after the fiery untamed tried another game. Doubtless severely depressed by the dreary surroundings and absolute want of vegetation, seeing nothing but grey stones and huge cliffs, he determined to commit suicide, and without more ado suddenly flung himself off the road or pathway, and found bottom on all fours, some twelve feet under. Mr. Harrison, being an excellent horseman, kept his seat. After this last failure the horse admitted his defeat and went on well enough, but this is written for those who may come after. It is no good whatever trusting to horses who are not accustomed to the mountains, and it is no use trusting to boots that are not suited to the mountains. Good horses for chamois work can be found at Sotres, and it was at that village that we were joined by what we may call the headsmen of the hunt, and the beaters. We are sorry to say, and Mr. Harrison's memory is equally defective, that we have forgotten the names of the headsmen, but any one wishing to follow our steps, by addressing us (the authors) at

Finchley, will be furnished with the fullest information how to proceed, and in any case they will find the right man on their arrival at Sotres. It should be noted that there is a regular recognised fraternity of beaters with their elders just referred to, and they will organise the whole expedition. Each beater is paid about eight reals, or 1s. 8d. a day, and wine extra ; the better way is to give 2s., and this sum to cover everything. The headsmen are paid on a higher scale according to agreement, and in their case a gratuity is always thrown in according to the sport and the sportsman's satisfaction with their work. Sotres is the nearest inhabited place to the hunting grounds, but it is much too far away to be used as a head-quarters, as it takes three hours of good riding (walking pace) from Sotres to Aliva.

Aliva is simply a collection of a few miners' temporary barracks, and the house where we stopped was put up by Señor Arce for his own accommodation when at the mines. We have no doubt whatever that Señor Arce would willingly place the house at the disposal of any party properly introduced. If however there are difficulties on this head, the only plan is to take tents, and camp even still nearer than Aliva to the ground to be shot over. Of course it must be clearly understood that all provisions would have to be ordered beforehand, and sent on to reach the head-quarters a day before the shooting party arrive. Messrs. Barnes & Co., of Upper Thames Street, who prepare regular cases of preserved pro-



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visions for the Indian tiger hunts, would, we have no doubt, thoroughly understand the requirements of the British chamois hunters in Spain. It must be clearly understood that no preserved provisions are to be had in Spain, except in very few places, and then at enormous cost. It is far and away the best plan to take the provender from London.

- All the party were very tired on arrival at Aliva, and we were very glad after an excellent supper to seek repose on the spring mattresses that lay around the floor of Señor Arce's mining house. At four in the morning we were awakened by the Captain of the Hunt, an apology for a breakfast was hastily snatched, the horses were soon saddled, and we were off for our day's work.

Not easily shall we forget that strange ride in the grey dawn of the morning, stupendous mountains on every side of us, and here and there in cavities large deposits of frozen snow—the rolling masses of white cloud and mist were lying hundreds of feet below us, and looked like a Polar sea. The transformation scenes as the morning wore on were surpassingly beautiful. The path we were following was a kind of track to an abandoned mine, and about six o'clock we found ourselves at the foot of the mountain we had to breast on foot. The few authorities on the subject differ as to the particular name of this mountain, but it is in the immediate vicinity of Peña Vieja—probably one of the highest elevations in the Picos, being some 9000 feet above sea-level.

And here a word of warning as to foot-gear. We shall give in his own words our friend's valuable advice on this head towards the end of this chapter, but should explain that the ground to be crossed is nothing else but a succession of large boulders interspersed with stretches of moving stones like road metal or ballast. What, therefore, is wanted is something that will not slip, so that when jumping from one stone to another there should not be the least fear of a firm footing. Boots with leather soles are no good at all.

After two good hours of this sort of thing we sighted about a dozen chamois going slowly up a snow gully, and sat down to admire their movements, which were brought out plainly in relief against the white snow. They were distant from us about a quarter of a mile, but were evidently quite conscious of our vicinity, as they would stop every now and again and look round them. They soon disappeared over a crest, and we then breasted the ascent again, and after about three hours from the time we left our horses we arrived at our posts.

Some idea of the country should now be given to enable the reader to understand the plan of operations. You find a succession of large hollows with precipitous sides, and two or three, and in some cases half a dozen, passes which the chamois habitually use when changing from one hollow (natives call them *hoyos*) to another. There is not a trace of vegetation except here and there, but at very wide inter-

vals small bunches of a thick sort of grass and Alpine flowers; and it is a source of wonder to us what so many chamois can live on, as in the whole day's wandering over their grounds we did not see enough grass to feed half a dozen. It should, however, be mentioned that a root called liquorice by the local inhabitants was fairly abundant. On arrival at the rim of the crater or hollow our captain and his headsmen planted us all at the various outlets and took up position themselves in good vantage points. The beaters, to the number of twenty or more, had left Aliva at midnight with instructions to beat to this *hoyo* we were now posted at, and we could now hear their peculiar shouts re-echoing far and wide through the almost deathlike stillness which surrounded us, and on peering cautiously over our stone ambushade we could see the chamois to the number of at least two hundred begin to make for the passes. The best dress the sportsman can wear is a grey corduroy and a cap of the same colour so as to blend with the surrounding stones as much as possible. Good warm underclothing is absolutely essential, as, although the sun broils one at times, yet on arrival at the posts when waiting for the game you soon begin to feel the penetrating cold of the mountain air, more especially if a sharp wind is blowing. Many people suffer from soreness of the eyes and even temporary blindness after being up one or two hours, and it is well to use a pair of green spectacles. To resume the history of the hunt

itself. It was now evident that the chamois were making for the side of the *hoyo* on which we were situated, and the beaters could now be seen distinctly against the sky-line on the opposite side doing their best to drive them towards us ; but it was not to be, as a slight wind got up, blowing our scent (and they are very keen in this regard) directly towards them, and we had the mortification of seeing them pass out of gun-shot range, through a pass between us and the beaters, many of them scaling a cliff which one would have thought nothing but a bird would have attempted. Two of our party fired, but, as far as they could judge, hit nothing, although the chamois were quite within range of the express rifles carried by one of them. The rest of us had very ordinary No. 12-bore central-fire breechloaders and cartridges filled with slugs, but on future occasions a general wish was expressed that the express pattern should be carried by at least two or three of the party, as these rifles are invariably effective where other guns cannot be used.

After a substantial luncheon, not quite so luxurious as those one gets accustomed to in tiger hunting however, but relished in a most uncommon fashion, we moved on to the next *hoyo*, about a mile further on, and in which direction the untiring beaters were driving. This was certainly the toughest bit of the whole journey, and getting over some bits it was just hanging on by one's eyelids. Of course in these expeditions the gun is always slung by a belt over

the shoulders so as to leave the hands quite free. On arrival at the hollow we found the wind had quite died away, and when we were posted felt much more confidence in the result of our sporting efforts.

Our expectations were realised to the full. In a minute or two we saw several batches of chamois in the bottom of the *hoyo*, evidently very much frightened by the shouts of the beaters, who in addition were rolling huge stones down the precipices, making a rattle like salvoes of artillery. The whole party was concentrated as much as possible. But here we must quote Mr. Harrison's own words from the excellent diary so kindly placed at our disposal.

"I was posted a little to one side of what was apparently the most frequented pass, communicating almost immediately with another *hoyo*. With my nerves all strung I heard a rattle of loose stones near me, and concluded at once that it could only be caused by chamois, the only living things besides ourselves in these wastes. Peering cautiously behind the rock which concealed me, I saw within twenty yards of me a male and female chamois, both standing stock-still, quivering in every limb, sniffing danger all around, but not daring to flee in any direction. This was of course only a question of seconds, and they were just turning to bound back again along the pass they had come by, when I fired at and wounded the male, who however did not fall but bounded up the side of the pass into a cliff overhanging the *hoyo* and then deliberately threw himself over. I feel quite

certain as to this bag, and my attention was now directed to the rattle of shots all round from the posts occupied by my companions, and I soon had other three or four chamois in range, one of which I killed. The result of the bag here was seven chamois, the one which threw itself over the cliff being afterwards recovered."

The hunters now prepared to return by the same road through a cañon they had taken in reaching the hollow; and again to quote Mr. Harrison's detailed account of the sport: "As the beaters were preceding us, we expected to get a shot or two on our way; and when about half way back to the spot our horses were left at, we were suddenly ordered to ambuscade by the old captain, and sure enough two chamois came tearing up the gorge over the boulders and loose stones as if it were green turf, and at a pace which defies description. They made for the sides of the cañon, and as the cliffs were almost perpendicular with the exception of two or three places where only a cat or a chamois could get over, and these were already occupied by the beaters who drove them back with their shouts, the poor animals at last took a path which conducted them to an isolated promontory and, as we closed up behind them, they had no chance of escape. When they saw their last retreat cut off, without more ado they took a grand leap into the gorge beneath them, and in all probability all died long before they reached the bottom. We were now visible by the beaters;

and here I must put on deliberate record my admiration for these hardy Asturian mountaineers. They had now been eighteen hours hard at work, covering miles of the most difficult country to walk over—walk over, did I say?—it is simply a case of constant jumping, climbing up and down cliffs, where it took a sound nerve and head not to turn giddy—and were then fresh enough to sling a dead chamois over their shoulders and carry it to Aliva, our headquarters.

“Thus ended my first experience of chamois shooting, and at present my last, as, notwithstanding the great attractions of the spot, owing to my totally inadequate foot-gear, I was reluctantly obliged to stay over and rest the next day along with one of my companions who was too tired to move. That evening the shooting party returned with six or seven chamois from a hunt over ground nearer to our headquarters, but a more difficult country to get at. They returned by a breakneck passage called the Canal del Vidrio (Anglicè, Glass Canal), made famous by Don Alfonso XII. having gone up it when on his chamois expedition in 1881. Although His Majesty had a zigzag footpath cut for him beforehand, it was an ugly bit of road to cross, and certainly demonstrated his mettle and courage. Owing to business engagements I was compelled to bid my friends *adios* on the morning of the third day, they proceeding even further up the Picos to make their headquarters at some wooden barracks belonging to my

friend Diestro, who will gladly put them at the disposal of any party going on the same errand, and here they expected to get a bear or two in addition to the chamois."

The captain and beaters from Sotres were also discharged here, as the next station was within the jurisdiction of other villages, whose inhabitants would require to be engaged, and they seem very careful of wounding each other's susceptibilities by encroaching on each other's preserves. After skinning the bag, the flesh was divided among the beaters, and each man started for home as happy as things mundane can be. I joined the "elders" of the tribes, and on our arrival at Sotres had a triumphant entry—the whole village flocking out to receive us.

I was compelled to dismount and try the best "brew" in wines the place could show, and was then escorted as far as Tresviso by one of the fathers of the village, accompanied by the ardent wishes of the whole community for a safe journey and a return to the chamois grounds the following (this) year—which I shall certainly do, if the fates are propitious.

The captain in charge of the beaters explained to me that he had stalked chamois various times; but it must be wearisome work, and not to be depended on. However, there are certain seasons when they come down close to Aliva to drink at the salt springs close to that place, and by laying in wait for them they are easily shot.

There are lots of wild boar on all the lower ranges of the mountains in the provinces of Asturias and Santander, and in the winter they afford excellent sport.

As regards foot-gear, Mr. Harrison writes thus : " Unless, perhaps, a good boot with a double rubber sole can be obtained, the best substitute is the Spanish *alpargata*, which is a species of sandal worn in the mountains, with canvas uppers and hempen soles. A boot of this description could be made at Santander, or the sportsman could remove the soles of a really good-fitting English sporting boot, and substitute the *alpargata* sole. I should say put on double soles, as the wear and tear is great. Perhaps, after all, rubber soles would be the best. It was all owing to my neglecting to supply myself with adequate good gear that I had to give up after the first day's hunt, my feet being completely knocked up. I wore simply *alpargatas*, and, not being a perfect fit, they doubled up after a time with the rough usage. The stones cut through the canvas uppers, and wounded me ; but, worst of all, the soles being hemp, with no inner sole of leather to present a smooth surface, the 'ups' and 'downs' of the hemp sole raised blisters which caused agony later on. I lay stress on this, so as to prevent others falling into the same trap."

The dense ignorance that prevails in England as to all that concerns northern Spain has of course prevented hitherto any systematic organisation for hunting the chamois. But some few months ago a

circular was privately issued from which we extract the following:—

“The want of a hunting ground, where ‘big game’ may be met with in their wild and natural state, within a reasonable distance of London, has long been felt. In the lofty range of mountains known as the Picos de Europa, province of Santander, Spain, the chamois rove unmolested, and in sufficient numbers to afford excellent sport, while bears, wolves, and wild boars, although not plentiful, are occasionally met with; whilst in the valley is a river, affording good sport both in salmon and trout. This region, one of the most picturesque, and with a climate unequalled in Europe, has hitherto been almost unknown to lovers of the gun, owing to the entire absence of any accommodation, however humble, being available either on the spot or within many miles, and although it may be reached within four days from England, *viâ* Santander, either by railway or steamer, to the present no attempt has been made to overcome the existing difficulty.

“Recently, however, a few noblemen and gentlemen have met, and suggested the establishing of what shall be styled the ‘Chamois Club,’ to consist of 200 members, candidates for admission to be proposed, seconded and balloted for, to pay an entrance fee of ten guineas within one month after being elected and receiving official notice from the secretary to that effect, and an annual subscription of two guineas, due on the first day of January in each

year, payable in advance. Ladies are also eligible as candidates on the same terms as other members.

“The officers of the club to consist of president, vice-president, and a council of six members, who shall constitute the governing body, to be elected by the members from among themselves, the only paid official, beyond the servants of the club, being the secretary, whose salary shall be £200 per annum, which sum will include the expenses of the office, to be situated in London.

“It is proposed to erect the club-house on the heights of Aliva, a romantic region in the Picos de Europa, 8000 feet above the level of the sea, and a favourite haunt of the chamois, owing to their resorting to drink at some saline springs in the immediate locality.

“According to the plans submitted by the architect, the building will contain dining, drawing, and billiard rooms; twelve roomy and well-ventilated bed-rooms (each supplied with a fire-place,) kitchens, wine and beer cellars, laundry room, and usual domestic offices; gun and harness rooms; stabling for twelve horses, and servants' apartments. The cost of building is roughly estimated at £1200, and for furnishing £800; these sums will exhaust the sum paid as entrance fee by the 200 members; and if building operations are commenced at once, the building will be ready for occupation in the autumn of this year.”

But we fear little or no progress has been made, and the reason is not far to seek. The circular goes

on to say that no profits will be allowed to the manager or anybody connected with the institution. We live in a commercial age, and people are inclined to think the labourer well worthy of his hire. If only the club was started as a sporting investment—bound to pay—either in the form of a private syndicate or as a small joint stock company, we believe the necessary funds would soon be got together, and suitable head-quarters erected for the hungry British and Spanish invaders of the homes of the chamois.

In the valleys of the districts frequented by the chamois, bears are to be found in considerable numbers; but the sportsman who really wishes to have good sport should certainly make Sotres his head-quarters. In this matter of bear hunts in the Picos de Europa, Lt.-Colonel Howard Irby thus wrote to the *Ibex* some little time ago:—"Our main object was to shoot a Spanish bear, but after several beats we were unsuccessful; the quarry, when started, would always go the wrong way, and never pass near our posts. Although some of the local *cazadores* had fruitless starts, all we saw of the bears was their foot-prints.

"These bear hunts were always headed by the *cura* of Bedoya, a jolly little priest, with a merry eye, in lay costume with the exception of his white collar. He was a great cazador, excessively active and energetic, and was very proud of an ardent spirit, the strength of which exceeded anything of the sort I

have ever seen; liquid fire would be the only name for it. In spite of these proclivities he did not neglect his sacerdotal duties, as one morning at daybreak found us at the Chapel of La Virgen de la Luz, an isolated shrine at an elevation of 4100 feet. The door was unlocked, our cura entered, and, donning his robes, forthwith said mass, the beaters with much devotion forming the congregation."

CHAPTER XIX.

A ROAD TO COVADONGA.

WE passed the day of Ash Wednesday in the ancient town of Potes, described in a previous chapter, and in the curious old church, dark and dismal, watched in the morning the quaint custom of putting ashes on the heads of the devout population. In the centre of the church was placed a real coal-scuttle, and as each devotee passed in single file, old and young, rich and poor, had a small scoop full of wooden ashes poured upon their heads by the attendant priest. We noticed, however, more women than men go through the ceremony, and as the former had their hair generally well greased, we could but think of the trouble and time which would be taken up in the cleansing of the head later on.

In the evening, close to the church, we attended a most unique *bal masqué*. It must be understood that the town, although containing a few rich people, is principally inhabited by the extremely poor, and that such a day as this is a gala day in their otherwise monotonous existence. We arrived at a small low building more like a cattle shed than a habitation, and having seen *Teatro* written on the door, on payment of fivepence each, were ushered into as motley

an assembly as one could well imagine. The dresses were of the simplest—nothing grander than cotton—save one female who was the admired of all, as she had a yellow sateen trimmed with scarlet, high-heeled boots, and a hat with an enormous feather. She, as they all were, was closely masked, and we could not for some time make her out ; but at last she proved to be the servant girl from the hotel in which we were staying, and the envy and remark of all her fair friends. The room, some thirty feet by twenty, was densely crowded—smoking, expectorating, and horse-play, screaming and shouting, making the place a very pandemonium. The orchestra—all local artists—was composed of a guitar, a fiddle with two strings, and a very dilapidated cornet, and, to induce harmony, by special engagement we had also a rough and weird old man who groaned sounds out of a mountain bag-pipe. Harmony there was not ; but fun and frolic of a kind continued until the band, revived occasionally by caña and other intoxicants, ceased to play and the wearied dancers retired to their respective homes. The morning broke fine and fresh, and perhaps from this old-fashioned Spanish town no finer view of the towering Picos can be obtained. In front lie beautiful hills covered with vineyards up to their highest altitude, and beyond the grandest, bleakest rocks, snow-capped, but with the azure blue base denoting distance and beauty. With light hearts, and spirits freshened by the crisp air of an early February morning, we left the ancient city by the western ap-

proach, following up the river Deva on its left bank. On the road, about a mile from Potes, we called at a roadside posada, where we saw a dozen skins of foxes beautifully cured and stuffed with straw. The government gives a dollar a head for foxes brought dead to the capitals of the province, where they have a small piece cut out of the ear, and then can be bought for a mere song. A fair quantity could be picked up in various quarters at about two shillings per skin, size about forty-five inches from nose to tip of tail, brush very bushy, and about twelve or fourteen inches long. The colour is a greyish buff, not very ruddy, and very handsome when made into carriage-rugs, or the like. We now crossed the river, and ascended a winding path through mountains sparsely wooded, and with, at times, poorly-defined roads and few inhabitants. When two roads divided, we had frequently to wait half an hour or more until a mountaineer passed to tell which road to take. Always ascending, we arrived about nightfall some hundred feet above a beautifully wooded dell, containing all that makes a picturesque village: rushing torrent, large waterfall, rugged rock covered with ferns and ivy, an immense walnut tree overshadowing the village green of Lou, and small church, and the twenty or thirty old verandahed houses placed on little plateaux one above the other. Having got the name of one of the inhabitants, we descended a precipitous bullock track, and, wading through many quagmires in front of various houses, found

our man, who agreed, though dark, to pilot us some two hours' journey still upwards to the residence of the lonely Englishman who has chosen the high Picos as his residence. The road lies through forests of stunted oak and birch. Although we had a lantern, we were frequently in mud and water where mountain rivulets unchecked traversed our path. We arrived at last, somewhat weary, and, although unannounced, were received with that cordial hospitality which an Englishman always gives to a compatriot in foreign parts. We are not aware of the exact altitude of our host's house, but judge it to be about 4000 feet. It is a large house, with stabling and farm buildings. It is all walled in to prevent the encroachment of wolves or other wild beasts. There are no houses or inhabitants nearer than Lou, and above the towering snow-capped Picos, dark, dreary and desolate. And here the author of 'My Tour in the Himalayas' shall give his personal narrative, as the writer of 'Coral Lands' took no part in that gentleman's rash attempt to reach Cavadonga in mid-winter.

My friend and I arranged to start the following morning, and over a good fire with our host we indulged in old English songs, which rose the echoes of this wild region, our friend remarking that during the many years he had been there such sounds had never been heard within his doors. The notes of that evening were: chestnuts, fire, and an old servant, then an English bed, and I

woke in the morning to the tinkle of the cow-bells. At last good-bye; we leave our host with light hearts, for the morning is fine and fresh, and our equipment as light as our spirits, consisting of alpine stocks alone—yes, I had forgotten, about ten pounds of raw beef, which was nearly playing a serious part subsequently. The path, which is but a mule track, rises for several thousand feet, zig-zagging upwards through an immense gully, which, in fact, is unbroken save for immense jutting rocks and caverns where enterprising miners have left pit-falls for the unwary right up to the highest picos. With light spirits and fine weather the first ascent was speedily overcome, and so precipitously were we rising, that for several hours we could see our friend's house below. At last snow was reached, first in patches only, which, with the warm sunshine, was melting away, leaving the ever damp and sloppy ground so unpleasant to the pedestrian. As the track became gradually covered with snow, we could only define it by indications and our mountaineer experience. Having generally the lead, my friend being less used to the snow than myself, I was gaily marching forward and upward, when, glancing round, to my horror, I missed his tall figure, but in an instant heard the cry of help, and, glancing in every direction, at last discovered a boot in the air, my friend having fallen down a cavity covered by soft snow. Shouting to him to remain quiet, I bounded down, taking a lower position than

where he had fallen, and, by dint of hard pulling downwards on a slope of snow, extricated him, more frightened fortunately than hurt, although, judging from the darkness below, the cavity was probably very deep; he hung by his legs with his head downwards. Laughing over this mishap we continued, being perhaps more careful than before, when, facing a singularly enormous precipitous rock, it struck me an echo to enliven our proceedings might be got out of even this wild and deserted spot. The Australian call "cooey" is perhaps the most effective test of nature's stored sounds, and our delight and surprise at the reply from the rock was immense. At first loud, even louder than we gave it, the mountains and little hills beyond echoed and re-echoed, until it seemed as if the whole of the snow-caps were welcoming us onwards and upwards. Knowing from Swiss experience how travellers will go in rain, sleet, and discomfort at all hours of the night or morning to hear such echoes as that of Lauterbrunnen or the horn on the Righi, I can recommend the spot as one of the most unique I have ever seen. My friend wished me to record this incident in a different manner, being not so matter-of-fact as myself, and desired me to mention that on our demanding at the top of our voices "How are you," the immediate response from our rocky friend was "Very well, thank you," and that the far hills laughed in sheer good humour; but *magnum est veritas*—and I proceed. The snow

was soft and sloppy, and all but bare jutting rocks now invisible, and we proceeded, knowing the direction only as our mountain instinct directed us. On a sudden I heard my friend declare, "look at these feet marks on the snow," and sure enough well-traced and newly trodden were Bruin's feet, probably a family party of three—father, mother and child—out for a winter stroll. We did not see a bear however; but from this moment I regretted not carrying a gun, revolver or other weapon, and thought gravely of the beef we were carrying, and the chance of some hungry wolf sniffing it in the breeze. These thoughts had barely passed through my mind when, about a hundred yards above us on a large patch of snow which was at first hidden by a perpendicular rock, a troop of fifteen fine able-bodied wolves marched in single file before us. Some twelve months before I had read in the *Daily Telegraph* a curious and sensational story of the Picos de Europa, somewhat as follows: "At a small and isolated village in one of the least known valleys of the higher regions, on Christmas-eve, midnight mass was being performed in the small parish church, at this time of the year half buried in snow. Hardly had the service commenced, when a pack of hungry wolves made a raid on the church and its occupants, and commenced a fight with the terror-stricken people; where the priest got to was not stated, but the sacristan with great presence of mind rushed into the pulpit and commenced to bark

like a dog, when the tide was turned and the wolves fled in terror to their mountain fastnesses." Having this somewhat improbable story in my mind I performed the same operation on the pack before us, mimicking the loudest and deepest dog's bark I could muster. The effect was peculiar, and at first disquieting; the long string of wolves in single file turned their noses towards us like a company of soldiers ordered "right about face" and commenced gnashing their teeth most unpleasantly, but as the barking continued, much to our delight "right turn" was ordered by their leader; and not hastily, but in good order, the enemy retired. The ascent was now entirely in the snow, which fortunately, owing to the colder region we were approaching, was fairly frozen over; and except for the sight of another pack of wolves some considerable distance off, and the footprints of a large bear followed evidently by its offspring, nothing further occurred till we gained the summit, about 8000 feet above sea level. During the last hour or two the mountain-tops had been gradually covering with cloud, and a blinding snow-storm met us in the face as we peered over the "col" and faced the north wind which was blowing a hurricane. Resting a few minutes under the lee of the rocks, we faced the blast and essayed the descent of the northern slope, not however being able to see many yards before us. The path at first was fairly defined, where the strong wind had denuded it of snow, but great drifts frequently crossed the road

round which we had to make long detours, occasionally dangerously near terrible precipices. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon when we arrived on a precipitous incline of snow, and all trace of the road vanished. We had been marching up to our knees in snow for some time, were wet through, our beards one mass of ice, our tobacco moist, and our matches useless, when I thought a parley necessary. The first question was, did my companion know the road. Yes, he did, if there had been no snow, no blinding sleet, and no darkness, such as was approaching. I saw the danger of moving, for we were surrounded by precipices, and I propounded three ways of procedure, 1st, to go forward at all hazards; 2nd, to return the way we came; and 3rd, to dig a snow house in one of the drifts, and remain there until the storm was past. Before deciding, my friend thought he would have one more exploration, and he struggled some fifty yards, but came back, stating he could see nothing but danger on all sides. We therefore gave up all idea of a forward movement, and only two propositions remained, which quickly resolved themselves into one, for we thought of the bears and wolves, and their unpleasant companionship during the darkness of a winter's night. Having decided to return, we put the best face possible on the matter, and I may say that during the terrible physical exertion of reascending, our spirits did not droop, and we laughed outright at our numerous stumbles and falls in the soft snow, now nearly up to

our waists. I shall never forget the fatigue to the legs, for every step the leg had to be lifted out of nearly three feet of snow, and deposited as far forward as possible. It was about half-past four, when panting and puffing, certainly warmer by our exertion, but half famished and nearly ready to eat our raw beef, which we still carried, we again reached the summit or "col," and, under a rocky shelter, breathed thanks for the past, and hopes for the future. The southern slope which we now descended bore quite a different aspect to what it did a few hours before; soft and large flakes had fallen, and, except for projecting rocks, had entirely obscured the landmarks of the path, and, knowing only the direction, we boldly went straight down. Cold and miserable as we were, we kept well together, cheering each other with occasional anecdotes, or perhaps a lively song, whose notes died away amongst the echoing Picos. At one point only was our rapid descent impeded; we had to jump from a jutting rock, now as slippery as glass as the evening frosts came on, upon a great incline of snow, some five hundred yards wide, terminating—should the foot slip, or the snow give way—in a precipice many hundred feet deep. With my Alpine and Himalayan experience I let go the rock and leapt boldly, immersing my feet but slightly, and, by a series of quick bounds, was across and safe on a rock on the opposite side. Turning round I found my companion had not been so happy, and was still clinging to the slippery rock, and calling for help. The more I told

him to jump, the more he protested he could not, and at last, as he probably felt his grasp giving way, he implored me to go on and leave him, as he said, to die there. I laughed it off, and promised to go to his relief, which I did by retracing my steps; and, giving him my shoulders to lean upon, let him down gradually, and step by step in my old footmarks we got across the danger and resumed our way downwards. As we left the snow, the storm from frozen rain gradually changed first to sleet, wetting us through, then to real, proper, heavy rain, which continued until dusk. We were, however, getting on fairly well, as our path, although precipitous, was now defined when there rose from the valley beneath what I can only describe as dense black smoke. It was wet mist or cloud, but it rose upon us as black as the smoke of a steamboat's funnel. I asked my companion what this was, but he could not tell. However, in less time than I write it was pitch-dark, and he and I, although close to each other, were invisible. By dint of our sticks and constant calling to each other we kept from separation and felt the edges of the road, and very slowly continued downwards. We had gone on groping in this way some half an hour when our sticks indicated all round no continuation of the road, and even by kneeling down we could only feel with the hands a fall on all sides without a path. Halting, we listened attentively to any sound, as we knew we could not be very far from our English friend's house, and in a few

minutes our delight was great to hear the cow-bell of one of his cattle down—deep down below us. We shouted then at the top of our voices, and the grim hills seemed in the still cloudland to laugh in echo at our position. Presently we heard a voice, and we were soon discovered by the servants, who, guided by our voices, made us out with a lantern, and piloted us down from what in the morning proved to us to be a most perilous position, almost on the edge of a 500 feet precipice. Tired, wet, hungry, and miserable, we rejoiced to think of the hospitable quarters we had left in the morning, and in a few minutes were at the portal and again within reach of a roaring fire. Our host was there at a table quietly indulging in the genial occupation of cracking walnuts, and without turning round or expressing surprise, simply said, "I expected you would return. Have a walnut." A walnut in our state! We pleaded for dry clothes and food; and then our host turned, and, seeing the plight we were in, instantly ordered the fatted calf, and in an hour our beef was cooked. We were well wrapped in blankets, and after a hearty meal were soon fast asleep. We have never attempted the high Picos again in the winter, but preferred the beautiful lower roads by the rivers and rivulets which ultimately take you to Covadonga without the perilous short cuts we that day attempted. The wise ones of our little party were sunning themselves at Potes, while an English resident in the Picos and myself were battling with an icy snow-storm.

CHAPTER XX.

THE CAPITAL OF THE ASTURIAS.

LEAVING Unquera about four o'clock in the afternoon in the diligence we reached the small seaport of Llanes about ten at night, and had to wait some three hours or more for the coach for Oviedo. We have been in Llanes several times, but it cannot be called an interesting place in any sense. The *Fonda de la Navarra*, however, is an admirably kept hotel, the bed-rooms are clean and comfortable, the attendance good, and the table-d'hôte undeniable. Moreover the charges are very moderate, being in fact only 4s. 6d. per day inclusive. Smokers will particularly relish the host's brands of cigars, which are far beyond the average of Spanish *fondas*. Of the night journey from Llanes to Oviedo we can say but little. We slept as well as the jolting of the wretched vehicle we were in permitted us; but after all it was only an apology for a rest, and we were by no means sorry when day broke, and found us approaching the prettily situated little town of Infiesto, where early coffee and bread and butter was to be had at the *Fonda Dupin*. Like all the region

of Cantabria, the country about here abounds in minerals of all sorts, and the presence of two strange Englishmen at once suggested "mines" to the shrewd native understanding. The consequence was that in a very polite fashion we were somewhat cross-examined as to which particular mineral we were in search of, and when we at length said that it was perfectly true that though "England was our home," we were on no great search for copper, or lead or calamine, or even iron, we were regarded by the inhabitants in much the same fashion as Mr. Clemens was in Honolulu, when he said he was "neither a missionary, a whaler, nor a member of His Majesty's Government." If it had not been for the perfect truthfulness depicted on our countenances they would have disbelieved us to a certainty.

Infiesto is embosomed in green hills of considerable height, and through the valley that they make runs the river Piloña; and a little below the town is the spot where Pelayo forded the river and so escaped from the pursuing Moors on his way to Covadonga. The story runs that being hotly pressed by the infidels, Pelayo, his sister and his squire, reached the banks of the Piloña and were despairing of finding a ford, when the latter rushing in shouted out, *Pie hallio*, "I find a footing," and the trio got safely across the rapid flowing stream. The descendants of the bold squire are to this day called *Pie-hallio*, and glory in the name. The footing which Pelayo obtained that day in the bed of the

Piloña was the cause of the Moors losing that which they had taken so much pains to establish in Spain itself.

Once past the cordon of hills which surround Infiesto the road passes through a slightly undulating grass country, without any features of great interest. The hedgerows in most cases are untrimmed and luxuriant, the fields are larger than they are in Biscay, cattle and sheep are numerous, but the farm-houses seem few and far between. The traveller is, in fact, traversing a broad belt of plain lying between the Cantabrian coast range on the right hand and the spurs of the Picos on the left; these look rather diminutive in the blue distance, and the general aspect of the scenery is just what one experiences in northern Middlesex or south Herts, say from the famed churchyard at Hendon or the pleasant garden of that quaint old hostelry, the "Old King of Prussia," at Finchley. A few scattered hamlets, villages they are not, now and again are passed; but, *mirabile dictu*, the coach stopped at none of them, and went on as steadily as a detestable trackway of loose stones with here and there an oasis of macadam would allow it, straight on for Oviedo, which cathedral city we were glad to reach after a nine hours' jolting. A cynical Frenchman, whom we met at the Café Suizo just after our arrival, said that the reason the diligence hardly stopped at all after leaving Infiesto was because no *vino tinto* or *ginebra* was to be had; the

coachman (he knew him well, the rascal) hated cider—apple orchards dot the roadside all the way—and he just pushed on to where he could get something to his stronger taste. Be that as it may, we have found Asturian cider well worth the drinking—perhaps not equal to the champagne brands of Herefordshire, but quite as good as that ordinarily sold in any part of England outside of the apple districts.

While we stopped at the capital of the Asturias the weather was only fitfully fine, and most of our time was spent in the cathedral, which is, in fact, the solitary lion of the place. There are a few pleasant walks in the vicinity, notably the Paseo de San Francisco and the Jardin Botánico. The university buildings are handsome, and so is the official residence of the provincial authorities, but one goes to Oviedo to see its cathedral and its world-famous Cámara Santa; and there is little else beside to see. The population of the place is about 35,000. According to some authorities Oviedo derives its name from the rivers Ove and Diva near which Pelayo defeated the Moors. Up to the year 770 the Gothic princes resided at Cangas (of which more anon), but about that year Froila II. made Oviedo his capital, and the see was founded about 810.

The cathedral is a fine cruciform structure in the Perpendicular style, and was built by Bishop Gutierrez de Toledo, in the latter half of the 14th century, on the site of an old church founded by

Froila in 781, but much enlarged by Alonso the Chaste in 802. We do not pretend the whole of the following account to be entirely original, but we have adapted it from the best works in Spanish and English on this noble building. The west façade of the cathedral is striking. A noble balustraded portico of richly ornamented arches stands between two towers, only one of which is complete. It rises to a little over 200 feet, is ornamented with buttresses, crocketed pinnacles, and open parapets. In 1575 the chapter added an open filigree pyramidal spire instead of finishing the opposite larger and incongruous tower, which is carried up only to the height of the nave. The high altar, which is in a pentagonal apex, is very effective, and it forms one of our illustrations. The retable is in five divisions, each again subdivided into five. The bas-relief figures represent the Life and Passion of our Lord. In the centre is the Saviour with the four evangelists; underneath the Blessed Virgin, surrounded by angels, and at the top of this fine piece of workmanship is the Crucifixion. The date of this work is 1440. The solid silver balustrade, which once adorned this part of the high altar, was appropriated by the French when they occupied and sacked Oviedo; but it has been replaced by a bronze one.

All the side chapels are more or less combinations of Gothic with the style of the Renaissance, and to the devotee of Pugin would be regarded as so many horrors. In the *transcoro* it is true that the elegant



THE HIGH ALTAR, OVIEDO.

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Gothic centre has been whitewashed, while on each side, altars of dark marble have been erected in a purely classical style. The former lady-chapel was the escorial, or burying-place of the early kings of Spain, and is now called the Chapel of Alonso II. El Rey Corto lies buried here together with Froila I., Alonso el Católico, Ramiro, Ordoño I., and many others. Six niches in the walls contain stone coffins. The original sepulchres, epitaphs, and inscriptions have all been ruthlessly swept away, and a wretchedly poor modern tablet alone records their time-honoured names. The gorgeous shrine of Sta. Eulalia, the patroness of the city, lies near the entrance—her body rests under the high altar. The stained glass of the clerestory is superb, especially that which is green. The cloisters, though they enclose a very small space of ground, are lofty and simple; the tracery of their windows is very rich and bold. The cathedral of Oviedo, however, apart from the Cámara Santa, would only pass at any rate in France and Germany as second rate, and this holy room must have some detailed notice at our hands.

Between the cathedral and the cloisters stands the great object of veneration; and the most interesting piece of antiquity in Oviedo, the Holy Chamber, which was built by King Alonso el Casto in the year 802, as a receptacle for the sacred relics, which had been transported into the Asturias from Toledo at the time of the Moorish invasion. It is strange that it contains no altar, for mass is never said

there; and Morales, the antiquary, who was commissioned by Philip II. to investigate the ecclesiastical antiquities of Spain, when writing his "Journal" in the building, says: "I write this in the church before the grating, and God knows I am, as it were, beside myself with fear and reverence, and I can only beseech God to give me strength to proceed with that for which I have not power myself." We are singularly fortunate in having an accurate account of the Asturian antiquities, drawn from personal observations and original documents, by so faithful a hand as Ambrosio Morales, as early as the sixteenth century, and further confirmed and illustrated by Sandoval in the seventeenth, and Risco in the eighteenth century; and those authorities have been frequently consulted in compiling the following account.

The Cámara Santa is raised to some height above the ground, in order to preserve the relics from the effects of the humidity of the climate; beneath it is a chapel, dedicated to the martyr Santa Erocadia, which may be seen from the cloisters—a simple, semicircular stone vault, massively built to support the superincumbent weight. The Cámara is approached from the south transept of the cathedral by a flight of steps leading through a winding way to a vestibule, from which you enter the chamber itself by a square doorway, descending by a shorter flight of steps. It would seem as if every precaution had been taken to conceal the building and the treasures which it

contains. Its dimensions are given as 24 feet by 16, exclusive of the sanctuary at the further end, the floor of which is one step higher than the rest of the building, while its roof, which is of stone, and plain, is considerably lower than the elaborately groined semicircular stone roof of the other part. Three groinings spring from pillars with richly foliated capitals, six in number, as there are two bays; and attached to each pillar, forming an integral part of the shaft, are two full-length figures of apostles, elaborately sculptured, making twelve in all. The pavement of this part is richly tessellated. The only window is a small opening at the east end in the upper part of the sanctuary. The ornamental work all through is Lombard or Romanesque; but there is, we believe, no doubt that the sanctuary is the only remaining part of the work of Alonso el Casto, while the outer part of the chamber, together with the vestibule, is of the time of Alonso VI., the end of the eleventh, or beginning of the twelfth century. The Spaniards always apply the name *Gothic* to the Romanesque style, as having been the work of the Goths (*obras de los gothos*), and the term is much more applicable to it than to the Pointed style.

The relics are shown to the faithful every morning at 8.30, and at that hour accordingly we repaired thither. Several lamps were then lighted; and one of the canons was in attendance, together with a chorister, who named and described the sacred objects. In the centre stands the Holy Ark, in which the relics were

originally contained. This is about five feet in length and three feet in width and height ; the top is flat ; and both this and the sides are plated with silver, which is richly embossed with figures and foliage, and there is an inscription relating to the relics. Its history is thus given by Morales:—" When Chorroes, the king of Persia, in the time of the emperor Heradius, came upon the Holy Land and took the city of Jerusalem, the bishop of that city, who was called Philip, and his clergy, with pious forethought secreted the Holy Ark, which from the time of the apostles had been kept there, and its stones augmented with new relics, which were deposited therein. After the victory of Chorroes, the bishop Philip, with many of his clergy, passed into Africa, carrying with them the Holy Ark ; and there it remained some years, till the Saracens entered into that province also ; and then Fulgentius, the bishop of Ruspina, with providence like that which had made Philip bring it into Africa, removed it into Spain. Thus it came to the Holy Church of Toledo, and was from thence removed to Asturias and hidden in the cave of Monsagro ; finally, King don Alonso el Casto removed it to the Cámara Santa, and afterwards King don Alonso the Great enriched it." There seems hardly any doubt that it was brought from Toledo to the Asturias, but it may well be doubted whether any of its earlier wanderings are authentic. The settings and ornaments of many of the relics are in the style of early mediæval art, and are superb specimens of jewellery

and silver-smiths' work. The relics themselves, of which catalogues are presented to those who visit them, are even more remarkable than the ordinary collections of such objects ; among them are found a piece of Elijah's mantle, some of " the hair with which the Magdalen wiped the feet of Christ," part of the broiled fish and honeycomb which our Saviour ate after his resurrection, and one of the thirty pieces of silver for which Judas betrayed Him. The most sacred of all is the *Sudario*, or sacred handkerchief, which is only shown three times in the year, when it is displayed to the people in the cathedral from a balcony which communicates with the staircase of the Cámara Santa. There are also two ivory diptychs of most curious workmanship, in one of which is a figure of Christ on the Cross, very nobly executed, with the legs hanging apart ; while the other is extremely rich and well carved, representing scenes from the life of our Lord.

These remains of veritable or doubtful antiquity are ranged on shelves and in cases about the walls ; there is, however, one among them, the genuineness of which has considerable probability in its favour ; this is Pelayo's oaken cross, which he bore in his hand when he sallied forth against the Moors from the cave of Covadonga. The wood is now entirely concealed by the beautiful silver-work, with which it is encased, and which is enriched with enamel and huge uncut gems. It is nearly, but not quite, a Greek cross, the upright being about two feet high,

the cross gird eighteen inches, and it rests on a kind of spike. It was covered with silver at Gauzon in A.D. 908, and dedicated by King Alonso el Magno, and has always been regarded as the one borne by Pelayo, which would very naturally be preserved as a relic; but Morales himself remarks that a difficulty arises from there being no mention of this in the inscription, which simply speaks of its dedication by Alonso. "I wish," says the faithful old antiquary, "that the king had stated that it was so in his inscription."

A local antiquary, who showed us over the building, pointed out to us some sculptural figures on one of the jambs of the main south entrance. They were in low relief, somewhat worn, but we could distinguish them as a man on horseback with a turbaned figure in flowing robes by his side. This, the antiquary told us, represented King Favila with a Moor in his company; but in this he was probably in error, for the figure which he took for a Moor is in reality a female figure, and the scene is part of the story of the death of Favila, which was a popular one in the Asturias, and is represented on several stones now existing in the monastery of San Pedro de Villanova, not far from Cangas. The story is, that Favila, who was the son and successor of Pelayo, the second founder of the Gothic monarchy, after reigning two years met his death in the following manner. Having returned one morning from a fray against the Moors, he determined to go out

hunting in armour as he was. His wife, having a presentiment of his death, tried to detain him; but he insisted on going, and was ultimately hugged to death by a bear on the mountains. Of the fact itself, independently of the details, there can be little doubt, as it is mentioned by Bishop Cebatiano, who says that, "quâdam occasione levitatis ab uno interfectus est, anno regni sui secundo."

As might be expected, Oviedo contains some of the most ancient Christian churches in the peninsula. The finest specimens exist on the lofty hill of red sandstone called *La Cuesta de Naranco*, which rises on the opposite side of a valley to the north of Oviedo, about two miles. This building is well worth the trouble of the walk out, as apart from its antiquarian interest the view of Oviedo backed by the mountains is magnificent. The latest opinions of Spanish critics on this interesting building is that it was originally built by King Ramiro, A.D. 850, for a palace, and converted into a church soon after (v. *Monumentos Arquitectónicos*). The church built in connection with it is S. Miguel de Lino. Santa Maria de Naranco has a semicircular stone vault, used as a crypt, similar to the one beneath the Cámara Santa. To the east and west of the crypt there is a rude chamber, and the entrance to the crypt is from the south side. The church is entered by a porch, which stands in the middle of the north wall. The interior is a simple parallelogram with a chamber at either end, that at the east being on the

level of the nave, that to the west is raised three steps above it. They are separated by round arches supported by elegant pillars. The church is fifteen feet wide and thirty-six feet long, exclusive of the chambers. In that to the east stands the high altar. Along the north and south walls runs an arcade with round arches supported by pillars with carved capitals. The roof is a round stone vault, with bands of groining springing from plain corbels above shields of ornament. On the capital of one column is a rude sculpture which is supposed by some people to refer to the female tribute paid to the Moors by Mauragato, who died about A.D. 788.

Oviedo in fact is a rich treasure store for the ecclesiological student, and should be much better known than it is. The time at our disposal was far too short to enable us to give, in full, descriptions of all the churches of interest. The curious in these matters of detail will have to search more ambitious books than the "*Highlands of Cantabria.*" Suffice it to say that we have pointed the way, and the intelligent scholar of antiquarian lore of the ecclesiastical and archæological types will find the work easily himself. If he is not satisfied with the study of the cathedral city of Oviedo and its suburbs he must be fastidious indeed.

From the capital of the Asturias we determined to next make our way to Gijon, celebrated as the only port in the peninsula which exports native coal. As Llandaff is to Cardiff, so is Oviedo to Gijon. We

quitted the times past for times present and to be as we entered the train at the railway station of the cathedral city, having tickets in our keeping for a purely Spanish coal-port on the south-west of the far-famed Bay of Biscay.

CHAPTER XXI.

A SPANISH CARDIFF.

As may be readily surmised, the train that took us from the capital of Asturias to the seaport of Gijon was in no particular hurry; to say that it dawdled is a matter of fact, but then railways are new in north-western Spain, and the particular extension by which we travelled, and which completes the chain of rail communication from the Bay of Biscay to Madrid, *viâ* Oviedo, was only opened in the August of last year. Being due at six P.M. we reached Gijon at eight, and, entrusting our scanty baggage to a guide, soon found ourselves at a most comfortable *posada*—not the Hôtel Métropole of the town, but the *Fonda Comercio*. Shortly after we had duly washed off our travel stains we sat down to an evening meal, of which the following is a faithful copy of the menu:—Pochera, or soup; white beans and bacon; ragout of mutton; fillet of beef with tomatos; veal cutlets and sauce piquante; salmon, boiled, cold; melon, sliced; roast turkey and salad; fruits assorted, café and cognac; wine *ad lib.* One of us endured it to the bitter end, the other fearing

the horrors of dyspeptic nightmare cried comparatively early, "I hold enough!" and to the waiter, "hands off," with almost the same impetuosity as Mr. Gladstone addressed those now famous words to Austria. There were plenty of supper eaters at our new-found hostelry—the genus Spanish bagman being prominent. The good wine was as abundant as sound, and sleep was soon attained in a comfortable room, which, by the reflection of the moon on the placid waters, we knew to overlook the harbour of Gijon, the most important of the Asturian seaports. According to some authors the place derives its name from *Gyphon*, or "valley of grace," in Syrian. It is the Gigia of the Romans, and has considerable historical interest. For instance, it was in the harbour of Gijon that Philip II. repaired the "Invincible" Armada, and by the irony of fate it was from Gijon that Toreno and the Asturian deputies sailed on the 30th May, 1808, to implore the aid of Britain to save Spain from the all-conquering Bonaparte.

About a little after seven in the morning a waiter brought us two excellent cups of coffee with hot rolls and butter; and eager in his search for knowledge, one of us at once left his bed to investigate what was to be investigated about Gijon. Directly in front of our hotel ran out a substantial pier with a harbour that seemed more or less full of shipping, and along this pier ran an elevated railroad, along which coal trucks, empty or loaded, were continually passing.

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To our right lay the quay itself, backed with more or less plain looking buildings, with one or two remarkable exceptions, while at right angles to the quay itself another pier extended so as to make with the coal used extension, already referred to, a perfect harbour for this solitary Cardiff of Spain. On his way back to the *posada* to tell his travelling companion what he had seen so early in the morning, the author referred to passed two gentlemen conversing, and was rather surprised to hear one of them use a word which the editor of a poetical dictionary would allow to rhyme with cram. Strange Spanish, thought the stranger, perhaps it is an Asturian idiom or it may be—and here the relics of a smile crossed his weather-beaten features—it *may* be a word which now and again is used in England by vexed persons of the stronger sex.

Curiosity being aroused the new comer followed the presumably idiomatic Asturian, who had left his friend, and found him in a doorway, over which was written in letters that those who run might read, *La Britannica*. Raising his hat with true Gijon politeness the tourist said, “I beg your pardon, but do you speak English?” Quick as lightning came the reply. “I did last night, sir, and perhaps I can to day. Will you step into the café and take a glass of wine or something; it is rather chilly this morning.” Of course; of course the inevitable Britisher had been found, like you discover him in the atolls of the Pacific, keeping bar rooms in the Congo or

seeing what is to be made of the early ecclesiastical history of the Patagonians down by Terra del Fuego for a good solid book of research to please the dryasdusts. Our new-found friend Mr. Lycett, who is the only English shipbroker in this little-known town, thereupon at once introduced his consort Mr. Jones, whose name is worthily immortalised in our preface.

The modern aspect of Gijon is hardly pleasing though the harbour is a fine one, and when some projected improvements are carried out it will certainly be a very formidable rival to Santander, if it does not altogether eclipse that somewhat stagnant port. We have christened Gijon a Spanish Cardiff, and before describing at any length the social and other life we noticed in its vicinity, we will just reproduce for our readers' edification some commercial jottings about the place that we took down from the mouths of the two worthy Britons we had the extreme good fortune to stumble on. Gijon is the natural port of the coal mines of Sama in the Langreo district, from which it is distant some twenty miles, the mines themselves being on the second range of the Cantabrian Hills. To connect these mines with the sea coast, a railway—being in fact the second in Spain—was opened in 1846, the major part of the capital being found by the mother of Queen Isabella, Queen Maria Christina. But the stock has since found its way into other than royal hands, the present holders being the Duke of

Riancores, and his friends, and the partners of the French firm of Mières and Co., who “run” the biggest iron works in this part of northern Spain : who was the contractor for the railway we do not know ; but so expensive was the work, or perhaps so much more truly great was the jobbery connected with the business, that when Queen Christina came down to declare the line open, she said that the rails ought to have been of pure silver, so extravagant was the cost of the new road. The mines themselves are worked into the slope of the hills, but a large quantity of the Langreo black diamonds are found on the surface. Not less than 500,000 tons of coal are annually exported from Gijon, and it finds its principal markets in Bilbao (for small coals only), Coruña, Ferrol, Cadiz, and the south generally. Nearly all these shipments go in English vessels, the freights being so much more moderate than by Spanish-owned craft. The average price of coal being 14*s.* per ton, free on board for the best, 12*s.* 10*d.* per ton for nuts, and 7*s.* and 9*s.* per ton for “washed” and small. According to Mr. Jones, who is a great authority on Gijon coal, it evaporates from eight to ten litres of water per kilogramme of coal as against the 7½ litres per kilogramme of the best Cardiff coal, and this was proved to be the case at a severe trial at the Government Dockyard at Ferrol. Some 3500 men are employed daily at these mines ; so the industry which has necessitated our calling Gijon a Spanish Cardiff is really in its present state of develop-

ment no contemptible feature in northern Spanish trade.

Like its British prototype Gijon has some very large iron works in its immediate vicinity, the proprietors being Messrs. Duro and Company. They have large mills for armour plates, boast a steam hammer of forty tons striking force, make their own coke in the Belgian style of ovens, while their blast furnaces are square in the fashion adopted at Cyfartha and Dowlais. Messrs. Duro and Co. own their own iron mines, but they mix with thirty-five per cent. of the Gijon ore, sixty-five per cent. of that of Somorostro, and the combination produces a No. 3 pig of excellent quality. As regards Asturian iron ores it should be stated that the percentage is as follows: forty-three per cent. pure iron, and seventeen per cent. of silica. To those generally interested in iron manufacture, it should be stated that whereas in England hoops are made from "billets" or pieces cut off from rough puddled bar iron, in the Asturias hoop iron is made direct from the puddled bar itself, and the result in "hoops" is considered to be greatly superior to the return of English works. The foreign trade of Gijon is rapidly rising in importance. Its imports include maize from the Danube and America, timber from Norway and Sweden, ropery and cordage from Belfast and Liverpool, "square gin" from Holland (how those quaint-looking green cases of J. D. K. Z., being landed on the quays of Gijon, recalled years long gone by in the great

South Sea when land was valued and sold by so many dozen or cases of "square face"), sugar and salt from Cadiz, and pitprops from the north of England. The leading item of export besides that of coals is nuts, and perhaps second to the romantic little port of Rivadasella, Gijon is the leading nut-shipping place in Spain. Barcelona nuts are so called in England because they do *not* come from that place. Once upon a time, so the story runs, the good mercantile folk at Gijon had rather overdone the thing in the matter of *avellana* or nut consignments to Barcelona, and the shipper of an English vessel homeward bound for the Thames was tempted to speculate at a low rate in the, to him, "new-fangled" dessert. He did so, and with true British conservatism the *Corylus Avellana* from Spain have been called Barcelona nuts in our country to this day. We presume the average Briton regards the harmless necessary nut as an admirable thirst provoker, for on no other grounds can we explain the strange way in which hot weather, crowds of pleasure-seekers, Bank holidays, and huge supplies of Barcelona nuts fearfully, wonderfully, and quickly consumed, get mixed up in the mind of the observant noticer of the manners and customs of the English.

Of these favourites of the ruralisers at Hampstead Heath and elsewhere about 18,000 tons were exported last year—mostly to London, Liverpool, and Bristol. Of chestnuts about 1000 tons were sent away, but in this item much depends on the severity of the

British winter. If our cold season is mild and open the offer of red hot chestnuts, even "twenty a penny," falls on deaf ears. It is when snow is falling or an icy wind tempered with sleet is making a big city's streets at nightfall more wretched than usual in an uncomfortable season of the year that the glow of the tiny furnace of the baked chestnut man is welcomed by the humble pedestrian, who gets a warm floury meal for a mere trifle. And when the news of continued cold weather in England reaches the Asturias more chestnuts are gathered, more vessels are laid on, and freights are "firm," with an upward tendency as the commercial reports tell us. Smart little vessels, like the *Telephone* of Plymouth, do a good business in this nut trade: she is only 44 tons register, carries 52 tons of dead weight, and gets about £100 for her freight from Gijon to some British port. They are admirable sailors these nut carriers, and when the winds favour them they will reach the English coast almost as soon as the steamers. Walnuts form a small article of export, about 100 tons being despatched from Gijon during the past twelve months, but the trade in Asturian butter, especially to Cadiz, Seville, and Cuba, is rapidly on the increase, more than 1000 tons being shipped in 1884. The butter as used by the Asturians themselves is simply the perfection of butter, and it is nothing short of a scandal that it has not yet found a trial in the English markets. The samples of export butter which we have tried, however, would not stand the test of the British private consumer.

Between what the Asturians treat themselves with and what they send abroad there is evidently a great gulf fixed; but we speak here with no little degree of uncertainty as we may not have been favoured with the best samples of Gijon export butter. The price in barrels runs about 10*d.* a pound wholesale. If properly managed 50,000 hand-picked apples could be annually exported from the Spanish Cardiff. To make a pipe of cyder thirty-three bushels of apples are required, and this quantity of the hand-picked variety can be purchased in the season at Gijon for \$8 or 32*s.* We make no comment on these figures except the remark that the statements can be verified by anyone interested; and those who care to inquire further will, if they write us to the address given in the preface, get as much information as lays in our power. In the retail market in the cyder season thirty good-sized apples can be had for a penny. The Asturian cyder is famed throughout the Spanish West Indies and central America, and large quantities of it in bottles are exported *viâ* Santander. This cyder is sound and good, and should find a ready sale in England if properly introduced. Bottles are, however, very dear in Northern Spain, and to obtain a margin of profit it would require to be exported in bulk.

Outside the port of Gijon the fishermen are fairly successful with lobsters, which are sent alive to Nantes, Havre, and Bordeaux, but they do not seem to sell many in the town itself. During Lent ling seems to be the favourite fish for those who scru-

pulously obey the laws of Mother Church, and occasionally it has fetched as much as 4s. 2d. a pound, a price which if asked in England would, we think, render at any rate abstinence from fish as well as meat compulsory on most of us. A good many tins of Spanish sardines are packed at Gijon every year, the tins by the way all bearing French labels, while large quantities of the same fish are salted and put up in barrels for export to the Mediterranean or the South.

The foregoing will give the inquisitive reader some account of the commercial side of Gijon. The town itself is, as we have said, not a very interesting one, the governor's castle being the most prominent building—this was built in the 17th century, and is a gloomy, heavy-looking structure. The proprietors' dues ($\frac{1}{10}$) are, as is often the case in Spain, paid in kind, wheat being the usual medium. This wheat is deposited through a kind of hole in the wall, and behind this entrance the proud proprietor of the province sits truly at the "receipt of custom." We have not the pleasure of knowing the gentleman who now occupies this important post, but we should say he must necessarily be proud, inasmuch as his motto—that of Conde de Revillagigeda, is—

Dispues de Dios la casa de Quiros,

which in English means :

After God the house of Quiros.

It is evident from this that "the grand old gardener and his wife" are not in it in the matter of descent as compared with the wheat-collecting aristocrat of Gijon.

The Town Hall in the Plaza is by no means a bad building of its sort, but to the critic's eye it is a pity that while the steps of the main stairway should be of white marble the banisters should be of wood painted white. The sham is easily detected and is not worthy of Gijon. In the court room of the Town Hall are some paintings, the best one being that of Claudio Alva Gonzales, who commanded the warship "*Villa de Madrid*," and a rather indifferent portrait of his present Majesty King Alfonso XII. The furniture in this building is plain but substantial—the presence of numerous spittoons being perhaps a necessary evil. At the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia in 1876, the following placard adorned its walls:—"Gentlemen will use the spittoons—others *must*." Justice to our Spanish friends compels the admission, however, that as in times of yore they uniformly placed themselves in the first category.

Not far from the Plaza is an antique low-storied building with columns like those one sees on the Spanish Dollar sometimes called the Pillars of Hercules, and this house is to this day called the Dollar House. The story runs that many years ago when International Law was not dreamt of and our Drakes and Raleighs were at sea on the war-path after any Spanish craft worth the trouble of

fighting or capture, that a vessel that owned the sovereignty of his Most Catholic Majesty was returning homeward from the Indies richly laden with bullion and coin of all sorts. The Spanish vessel was almost in sight of the snow-topped Picos de Europa when, to use an idiom of Mark Twain's, one of those accelerators of merchant ships' passages, in other words an English pirate ship, appeared, making the best of a stern chase. The Spaniard did his best, but still the free-lance of the ocean gained and gained on his lumbering galleon. At last, fearing a hand to hand combat—his sailors had become demoralised by luxury in the "Indies"—he loaded his long carronades with silver dollars, and so excellent was the marksmanship of his sea-gunners that in a double sense they soon took the wind out of the Englishman's sails and the treasure-bearing Spanish vessel with the great bulk of her cargo soon found safe refuge in the harbour of Gijon.

In connection with this harbour, which is about to be immensely improved by the creation of two new large moles, it should be said that a quaint map of Gijon and its port, bearing the date 1635, exists in the Town Hall, from which it is evident that the old town just clustered round the bluff near which the Governor's castle now stands, and that where the new town with its ironworks, railway stations, Government cigar and cigarette factory, employing 1000 hands, now stands, was nothing else but a swampy marsh tenanted perhaps by the same kind of wildfowl who now swarm in the lagoons of San Vincente de la

Barquera. On the other or western side of the really fine bay that Gijon possesses is a rapidly rising watering-place where good bathing is to be had. On the eastern side, above the old town, is a well-cared for lighthouse with a small block fort containing accommodation for some few artillerymen; but, as is the case in all the towns of Northern Spain, the military are not much *en évidence*. It is "down south," where the revolutionary disciples of that hideous lie—liberty, equality, and fraternity—have been sowing their evil seed that the Madrid Government want their soldiers and their weapons. So long as the pretensions of Don Carlos are not flaunted before the face of the northern Spanish peasant he will work on contentedly even in the Basque provinces. In the Asturias the red rag of Carlism will hardly affect him at all. One of the sights of Gijon is the Asturian Institute, founded by that true patriot and Spanish benefactor Gaspar Melchor Jovellanos, who was born in the city on the 5th January, 1744, and who died a persecuted man in 1811. The library in the Institute is a fairly good one, and the collection of original drawings are worthy of study; but the collection is very badly classified. Murillo, Pontorrello, Salvator Rosa, Albert Dürer, Velasquez, are all represented. It is said in guide-books that English is taught at the Institute, but on inquiry as to who the professor of our mother tongue was we were informed that he had died many years ago, and no one had been appointed in his place; more the pity, in our opinion. As a usual thing, it is

to reverse matters to go from the Institute or Academy to the gaol, but in the Asturian Cardiff that was our experience ; and we cannot say that our insight into durance vile was altogether an unpleasant one. Turning up a bye street we came to what was apparently a carpenter's shop, and after a few questions had been asked of and answered by a respectably dressed working man who was busy with a saw, we soon found out that he was the head gaoler and the responsible party for some twenty or thirty male prisoners—of the gentler sex there were none. Up a dingy flight of stone steps, clean enough however, we came to a doorway surrounded by iron bars, and looking through these we saw the Gijon prisoners' sleeping and common room in one. Three or four large windows opened out on the streets below, and as two of these were open the ventilation was good. Each prisoner had a separate bed, and in a corner of the room, which was fully sixty feet by twenty, were the needful appliances for washing ; whether compulsory ablution was the rule we do not know. About a dozen or so of men were lounging about, nearly all smoking, and the fun of the thing—it was 11 A.M. when we paid our visit—was evidently the reluctance of one particular gentleman to quit his bed. Some of his companions, whose spirits were in no way damped by their confinement, evidently resented this indulgence in the luxury of bed as a proof of his inherent laziness, and, virtuously inclined themselves, belaboured him severely with their pillows, a bit of

pleasantry which brought down the prison, we mean the gaol-birds, in the shape of laughter and applause. After standing this buffeting for some time very good-naturedly the lazy man got up and was at once accommodated by one of his quondam enemies with a cigarette. Not a man among these inmates had that unspeakable look which unhappily only too often our own prison occupants have got. They had got into "trouble" on some comparatively minor matters, and as the gaoler explained to us, even the more serious cases were marked by not so much malice or wickedness, as pure and simple recklessness or carelessness. Grave offences against the person are hardly known in the Asturias, and purely commercial offences are usually settled among the parties themselves. Petty robberies and the like are checked by a few days' confinement, but generally speaking the provincial Spanish authorities have a very wholesome dread of filling their prisons, and it is not till a man has once or twice overstepped the bounds of the law that he finds himself locked up, and then, *bien entendu*, it will only be for a short time if he shows the least compunction at his past career. For the genuine criminal class—as it unfortunately exists in Madrid and the big Spanish cities as elsewhere in the centres of our boasted civilisation—a very different treatment is administered ; but to consider the penal code for a class which has practically no existence in the Highlands of Cantabria would be altogether out of our province.

The prisoners at Gijon receive subsistence money to the extent of fivepence per day per individual, but as their friends have ready access to them at all hours, and can bring such food and luxuries as they can afford, the average *détenu* does not altogether rely on the municipal pittance. Some little time ago a British sailor for some minor offence was incarcerated at Gijon for a term of three weeks, and soon found out that his ignorance of the language and the fact that he had no friends put him at a serious disadvantage in regard to the comforts of the inner man as compared with his locally better-known comrades. The case of the hungry Briton was, by our friend the carpenter-gaoler, duly brought before the Alcalde, who compassionately remarked, that the English were always in the habit of feeding better than the Spaniards (if his worship knew all we know of the East End of London he would think differently), and that it was not part of Spanish law that a man should be starved as well as imprisoned, and therefore he decided to allow our offending fellow-countryman a full peseta a day. Jack's delight was unbounded, and when, through the means of his Spanish fellow-prisoners, he found what a peseta would furnish, it is to his credit to add that he cheerfully allowed to them at least some portion of the extra fare he had been enabled to obtain.

But, however, every prison has its "black hole" or punishment cell, and the one we inspected at Gijon was a fearful place indeed. Black as despair itself,

its walls and floor were shining with disgusting ooze ; but the unfortunate tenant has company all the time he is there, as there are plenty of rats to share the darkness and filth with him. In Gijon this awful looking place is seldom inhabited, and then only for a few hours. Whatever people who lived in the days when barons and other wicked persons were continually and for ever putting their enemies in dungeons under the castle moat may have stood—nowadays solitary confinement for a long time in such a black hole as that of Gijon would soon bring about insanity.

Justices' justice has been for such a long time a joke in Britain that we feel a nerveless hand grasp the pen as we venture to record one of the stories of the curiosities of judicial administration as developed at Gijon.

At any rate, a Spanish gentleman, who shall be nameless in this work, had a quarrel with another about certain attentions paid to his fond spouse. The explanations offered by the latter were not considered satisfactory, and an assault was the result. The case being brought before the magistrate, the caballero, who thought himself insulted, was committed to prison for a term of fourteen days. An official was sent to conduct him to the lock-up, but this man he declined to follow, because his shipbroking business would certainly fall off if he was in gaol; the policeman represented this fact to the justice, who admitted that there was much truth in it, and therefore,

under the circumstances, he would only confine Señor X. to his private house for the period determined on. Once again the official waited on the gentleman, and told him what the magistrate had decided, but the passionate defendant indignantly asked the question—how he could be expected to do his business unless he went to his office? It was simply absurd for the *Alcalde* to expect that he would see all his business friends and acquaintances in the privacy of his own drawing-room. This new view of matters was duly brought before the authorities, who in the end allowed Señor X. to go to his office on condition that he would promise not to frequent the *Café Suizo*, nor walk on the quay-side, but be a reformed and well-mannered shipping merchant, come home regularly to tea, and never more go hitting people about with his fists. Well, all's well that ends well. Whether Señor X. promised or not we do not know; but we met him on the *muelle*, we clinked glasses at the *Café Suizo*, and nobody seemed one penny the worse. The tourist may happily spend many a day about Gijón and its environs. The fine broad *Calle Corrida* is well worth a stroll, and the gate del *Infante*, erected by Charles III. in commemoration of Pelayo, if a little out of the perpendicular, is worthy of attention. The harbour is always attractive, and a fine view of its noble proportions can be obtained from the signal station on the top of the hill of Santa Cantabria, which is, in fact, the projecting low peninsular

headland on which the town is built. We have already referred to the good firm sands and excellent bathing to be got; and considering that the daily expenses at the *fonda*, including board, lodging, attendance and wine, are not more than six pesetas a day, those of our readers who, mustering up a little Spanish—and a very little will go a marvellous way—find their way to Gijon will, we think, thank us for the hint to go and judge for themselves.

CHAPTER XXII.

REAL WHITBY JET, AND WHERE IT COMES FROM.

BOTH to the east and west of Gijon lovely scenery is to be found all along the sea-coast, which is here alternately bold and rocky or verdure-clad almost to the sea beach. We have no space for details of many pleasant excursions, which, thanks to our meeting the only shipbroker and his friend Mr. Jones, we were enabled to take in the environs of the Spanish Cardiff, but one or two must be noticed. Perhaps the most beautiful walk out of Gijon is that to the little village of Deva, about three miles from the town and where there is a church which was built in 1006. The interior of the church is not very interesting, but in an adjoining farm-yard may be found by the curious two fine Byzantine capitals and some wooden figures of saints of the Romanesque period. This was a purely pedestrian day; but on another occasion when we had chartered a fly and drove out to the east of Gijon, keeping as nearly as we could to the coast, we made that remarkable discovery that, like many other things in this deceitful globe, "real Whitby jet" does not come

from Whitby at all, but is sent to Whitby from near Gijon in Spain. It is very distressing all this uprooting of the most cherished traditions of our blameless youth; but it is a strange world we live in, and therefore one is not at all surprised to find that cocoanut oil is exported from London to Levuka Fiji, and that "Whitby jet" is imported into Whitby and afterwards, as pure Whitby and nothing else but Whitby, is actually sold within a mile or so of where it is found. Within nine miles of Gijon any amount of jet is to be found in the district called Las Marinas. It is, in fact, a well of triassic formation, running from Villianosa to within two miles of Gijon. It is usually found in a decomposed bluish sandstone running in very irregular layers of a maximum thickness of two and a quarter inches. There are two varieties of Whitby jet. One is evidently of chestnut origin, which "creases" when exposed to the sun, and another of a very different wood. The first variety is evidently the tree itself, whereas the second is the bark. The cylinder of the tree has been actually extracted from the workings and is often met with. Like the coal at Langreo, the jet is worked at the side of the hill, but boring in any part of the triassic formation, jet is to be found at a depth of from five to twenty metres.

Till comparatively recently, about three years ago, this trade has been a practical monopoly of an Englishman living at Gijon, who, as might be expected, has made a fairly large sum out of the

"lignite," that being the name by which it is imported into England. The price of production of 112 pounds of superior jet is twenty-five shillings, and, as Mr. Wright of Whitby gives two shillings and sixpence a pound for it, it will be observed that the business is far from being profitless. About 1600 boxes of about 112 pounds each go annually to London from Gijon. The mines of the original jet mine proprietor are, we understand, practically exhausted, but others are being worked, but only on a small extent owing to want of capital. We happen to know of several good mines which would pay handsomely if the owners were enterprising, business-like, and had some little capital. The price of jet is artificial altogether, and should come down. The Whitby jet manufacturer, when he has received his lignite from Spain, is wise in his generation, inasmuch as he never allows a workman to do more than one operation. Number 1 "roughs" or cuts up the jet; No. 2 will roughly shape it; No. 3 furnishes and polishes it; No. 4 will bore; No. 5 will attach gold or the like, and No. 6 will pack up for export or home market. Why the jet ornaments cannot be manufactured at Gijon instead of in Yorkshire fairly puzzles us. If we were company promoters we would suggest a joint stock organization with moderate capital to be called the "Real Whitby Jet Company, Limited." We would get hold of some of the best men in Whitby, secure one or two of the mines at Las Marinas, establish works at Gijon,

and if we would not pay a fair dividend, and at the same time defy all honest competition, it could only be by the grossest mismanagement.

After we had found where Whitby jet came from, we paid sundry and divers visits to the mines, and we were well rewarded for our trouble in many respects. On one occasion, going up to the higher workings of the mine, we saw that the bark is fossilised into perfect jet, while the interior of the tree was even then (October last) rotten wood and nothing more. On the outer workings the bark only, is fossilised jet, while the tree itself is solid crystallised limestone.

Quite apart from the interest of the mines the pleasant undulating country of Las Marinas has innumerable charms for those who love nature. The strange Asturian farm-houses with their quaint interiors abound in this district, and the traveller can revel in breezy walks over the sweeping downs that will remind him of Sussex at its best. If the sun is now and again hot, the sea wind from the blue bay before you tempers its rays, and for combining scientific business with healthy pleasure, a visit to the jet mines at Las Marinas can be confidently recommended.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BY THE QUAY OF RIVADASELLA.

WE were very reluctant to leave pleasant Gijon, more especially perhaps on account of Señor Jones and his friend Lycett, the only shipbroker ; but time, as the song goes, is "a master all must obey," and the fugitiveness of his character hastened our departure. Accordingly, early one bright morning we settled our modest reckoning at the *posada* and went by the solitary A.M. train on the line to the coal mines to Langreo, intending to leave the rail at the station of Noreña, where we should join the coach going eastward from Oviedo. The existence of this line enabled us to avoid revisiting the capital of the Asturias, and therefore saved some time. The distance to Noreña is only fourteen miles or thereabouts—but in this short journey we met with a fellow-countryman. He was riding in the next compartment, and overhearing a peculiarly hearty laugh, concluded that we must be English, and determined on finding out for himself. Consequently, at the very first station from Gijon he entered our division of the coach, and soon found out that he was

perfectly correct. He was a cheerful specimen of the ubiquitous British engineer going to visit the coal mines in the interests of some friends at Oporto; and we were sorry to say good-bye to our new-found acquaintance, when the train, having been pulled up by cable a steep incline near the station called Florida, landed us at Noreña, where we had not long to wait for the Rivadasella coach.

While we were wandering around the Spanish Cardiff we had no fixed intention of visiting the place referred to, but we received from Mr. Lycett such a description of the little seaport and such a letter to a landed proprietor in the neighbourhood, that we hastily scattered all programmes to the wind and made for the famous quay.

If travelling at the top of a northern Spanish diligence does not encourage the cultivation of the blessings of being patient and philosophical, nothing will. It is true that after we had quitted the flat country the scenery got interesting, not to say beautiful, but trunks make at the best but a bad bed, and a rut favouring road does not take off the sharpness of their edges.

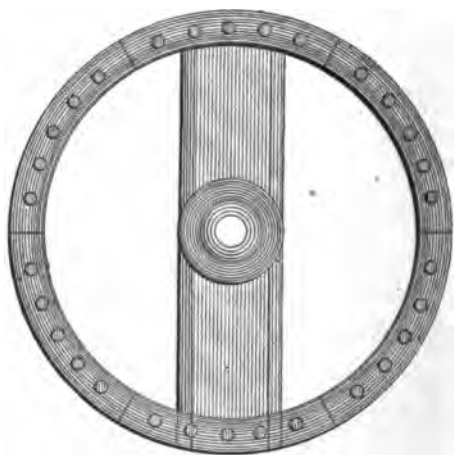
All things, at any rate in this sublunary world of ours, however, come to an end, and we were not at all displeased to shake our stiffened legs at Infiesto, where we lunched off a fairly substantial meal. Amid exquisite scenery the coach continues its way to Las Arriendas, where connection is made with the Rivadasella conveyance. Las Arriendas is situated

at the junction of the two rivers Piloña and Sella; and as the coach road, on a high embankment, keeps by the side of both these streams in succession, while trees on either side, and whose branches meet, line the way, it may readily be imagined that the neighbourhood of this little-known town is pleasant enough, especially in fine weather. When the town itself is passed *en route* for Rivadasella a lower level is obtained, and by the side of the murmuring Sella, itself surrounded on both sides by high hills, the road reminds one much of Loch Maree in Ross-shire. Here the journey is completed, and perhaps the quaintest port in the Asturias is reached at last. Take it at its best, it is a tiresome journey however, and when, as in our case, the fatigued traveller finds himself immediately in rear of a carrier's cart stuck in the mud, and has to wait an indefinite time for the extrication of the jaded horses, he will find it a great trial for his patience; but the road from Las Arriõndas to Rivadasella is worth the trouble if viewed in the right spirit.

The little town is situated on the right bank of the Sella, and is fairly laid out, at the back of a long well-built quay alongside of which on the occasion of our last visit several little craft flying the Union Jack were engaged in loading Asturian, or we should say, of course, Barcelona nuts, of which some 2000 tons were exported to Britain from this place during the year 1884.

The entrance to the port, like that of Tina Mayor, near Unquera Bridge, is a very narrow one, but there

is no bad bar, the water at spring tide being twenty-six feet and at neap tides sixteen feet deep. Even when the strong north-west wind prevails there is no sea to speak of, and the harbour itself is thoroughly protected. There is excellent anchorage, and the headland on the east side of the port affords a capital shelter. Rivadasella, with its population of less than 2000, vies with Gijón in its export of nuts, and the picking of these little edibles by men and women in



the large nut warehouses is quite a feature of the place. During the season it is in fact quite a sight to see the apparently endless procession of nut-laden carts, with their quaint wheels having only a single spoke, deposit their burdens at the doors of the sorting places, and then see the cheery Asturians singing as they work and pick the nuts for the peculiar benefit of the British Bank holiday consumer. For this labour the women earn about $7\frac{1}{2}d.$ a day, while the few men em-

ployed get as much as 1s. 8d. To encourage the production of nuts, maize is given to the peasantry in March in exchange for nuts in September.

The Posada del Sella is clean, comfortable, and very moderate in its charges, although the weak-stomached Briton may possibly object as we did to stewed octopus in ink-black sauce, forming part of the menu of an otherwise pleasant little supper. There is a place for everything, and if the octopus is not at home in, say, the Brighton Aquarium, he ought to be; he has really no right to aspire to the dignity of the dining table. Of the town itself little need be said except perhaps that it boasts the birthplace of Dr. Augustin Arguelles, called the Divine, the celebrated tutor of Isabella II., who died leaving every peseta he possessed to that lady and not one to his family.

The Sella river is one of the most famous salmon rivers in Spain, and fish are continually being caught in it weighing from eighteen to thirty pounds each. Nets are chiefly employed, and one Rivadasella fisherman has been known to catch as many as one hundred salmon in one day. The price at Rivadasella varies from 7½ to 10d. a lb. according to supply.

One of the pleasantest walks in the immediate vicinity of the town is that to the sulphur springs on the sea port and close by the entrance to the charming little port. There is a little climbing over the rocks, but the average pedestrian, lady or gentleman, would enjoy a most delightful ramble with a noble seascape and a fine bold background.

One of the show places about four miles westward from Rivadasella is the extraordinary natural phenomenon called Intre-peñas. Here by some violent concussion—fire looked the cause, but it certainly was not—the cliffs near the sea have been torn asunder and twisted into all manner of strange and weird shapes. One solid pillar of rock, over 800 feet high, was much larger at its summit than its base, and as one looked at it one was astonished at its perfect balance. At the foot of these remnants of a great upheaval a narrow stream runs out to the Biscayan sea. On either side of the rocky pillars are steep sloping hills covered with gorse and other vegetation, while the rich undulating country is the pleasant rural-looking background. On our first visit to Intre-peñas we went over the bridge and down a very steep path from near the largest pillar to the river bed, but this is a mistake to be avoided. There is a foot-path on the right hand side looking west which skirts the little church and hamlet, and which, if followed, will enable the tourist to get a splendid view of this remarkable freak of nature. The author with the longer name boasts another way of “doing” Intre-peñas, which can hardly be recommended to the average traveller. Instead of going down the very steep but certainly used path, the writer of ‘Coral Lands’ insisted, like a certain Mr. Jones, of making a way for himself, the consequence being that he fell ingloriously about thirty feet into a perfect bed of briars and prickly things of every sort and variety. The struggles

of Laocoon with the serpents were renewed in his person in the lonely Spanish valley, but a good jack-knife at length freed him, and torn, cut and bleeding, he rejoined his companion. "Keep to the old paths" is sound advice as to most things.

Near Intre-peñas is a little inn where excellent cyder can be had for a very reasonable sum, two full pints being given for a penny. Most of this part of the Asturias is simply a large orchard, and the quantity of cyder produced is something astonishing. We have referred to a letter of introduction, which kindly Mr. Lycett gave us at Gijon. On reaching Rivadasella we found that our friend was away but was expected in a few days, so as Don Antonio Pelayo was a gentleman not only of wealth and importance, but, as we afterwards found out, well worth waiting for, we stayed over at the little Fonda del Sella till our expected host should arrive. From this centre we made numerous short excursions in all directions, and had, therefore, plenty of opportunity of learning all that was to be learned about the Asturian peasantry. As Mr. Ford well says, "In the Asturias, a country little exposed to Moorish and Spanish forays, security of person and property has long existed." Accordingly the peasantry, instead of herding for protection within walled towns, live in small farms and often own the fields they cultivate. Land in general is more subdivided here than in the south, where large districts were granted to the *conquistadores* who

assisted in ousting the infidel occupants. The costume of the lower classes is Swiss-like. The females, when dressed in their best, wear bodices of yellow or green laced in front and adorned with gold *joyas* and pink and white coral necklaces. Dark coloured serges and black mantles are thrown over the head ; sometimes pretty handkerchiefs are used which are tied loosely round the front, while the hair hangs down behind in long plaits. The rude Gallican *mordreñas* or wooden shoes are here often replaced by leather ones, and a small sock edged with red or yellow is worn over the stockings. The men generally wear home-spun linen cloth and a black cloth cap, though the nineteenth century bowler or felt hat is rapidly coming into fashion, especially in the larger villages. The national games may be described as skittles and single-stick, at which the peasantry are great adepts. The game of skittles after the last mass on Sundays is quite a recognized institution in every village, and the whole population turn out to watch it. As in other parts of Spain, the men go by themselves and the women by themselves. The free intermingling of the sexes in social life, such as obtains in England, France, or Germany, does not exist in Spain ; so that on a Sunday morning when the country people are coming into church you will find the straggling procession commence with a vanguard of the fair and "devout sex," while the rear is brought up by the men who are in no particular hurry to reach the

church, at any rate, before the first gospel is read.

Numerous stories exist of the prowess of the Asturians with their shillelahs. On one occasion near Rivadasella a faction fight occurred near a village church, and the civil guard and carbineros to the number of six very properly interfered. These were armed with rifle and bayonet, and used their weapons as well as they could without firing. The peasants, who were only equal in numbers and merely carried their sticks, soon drove off their assailants and captured the six rifles.

If little or no beer is drunk in the Asturias, skittles enter very largely into the life of its people, and the males of the entire village meet nearly every day and always on Sundays for their favourite amusement. In the towns a much higher pitch is given to the ball than in the more rural districts; and it is nothing short of marvellous to note the proficiency some of the peasants have acquired in the game which in this country is so closely associated, in common parlance, with foaming tankards of the product of John Barleycorn.

The few days' waiting pleasantly passed away, and our host arrived. A tall commanding-looking, but rather slight figure, an eye like an eagle's, a *bonhomie* that was perfect in the honesty of its kindness—such we found to be the characteristics of Don Antonio Pelayo, as, after reading the letter we had brought with us, he welcomed us to his

residence. He would not allow us to remain at the hotel. Having found out by cross-examination—Don Antonio speaks very fair English indeed—that we had done the lions of Rivadasella, he courteously proposed a drive to the tomb of his ancestor—the great Pelayo, the founder of the Spanish monarchy at Covadonga—and as this would mean a long day's work, we must have an early start. A little before nine, therefore, we inspected the stables and were shown our host's favourite charger, of which he had good reason to be proud; but he seemed more anxious for us to praise the English-made saddle with the maker's name on it—Urch & Co., Long Acre—than anything else, and we could not resist a slight feeling of pride in our national skill in manufactures when our friend remarked that there was not a saddle better than that in all Spain; and, he added, "everybody here is now getting their saddles and harness from the big store you call England." Thoughts of the statistics of a falling export trade passed through our minds as we sighed a gentle "we hope so," and followed our host to breakfast.

Here a certain surprise awaited us. We have lived in strange places and have led strange lives, but such a mixture of liquors at a forenoon meal we have never before encountered. A pre-breakfast "nip" is common enough in the pioneering colonies, but the meal itself is generally not accompanied by spirituous liquors. Firstly we were asked to have

brandy, then rum, and having so far complied with our courteous host's evident wish out of pure kindness, to prevent us seeing at all that day, by accepting a liqueur glass of very old cognac, he apparently was much put out by our refusing to drink some of Guinness's bottled stout, which was opened especially for us, which he thought was the invariable liquor to wind up a real old English breakfast with. We were very firm as to that stout, and as well as we could pointed out that fiery spirits were hardly ever taken early in the day in our island home.

Before accompanying the reader to the birth-place of Spain—Covadonga—by the quaint little town of Cangas Onis, we must here deliberately put on record that, at any rate in Northern Spain, they slightly overdo the politeness of wishing one and another good morning and good day. In the country proper this is all very well, but it grows somewhat monotonous near the towns, and we noticed it particularly in the very rural suburbs which surround Rivadasella. One morning we were going out of the town and a large proportion of the rural population seemed bent on going in. The following is a sample of the cheerful conversation we enjoyed—“Well—*buenos dias*—the last time—*buenos dias*—I saw him he only—*buenos dias*—said—*buenos dias*”—and so on for twenty minutes. The English was between ourselves, the Spanish salutations for the numerous passers by. As soon as twelve o'clock has

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struck you are expected to say *buenas tardes*, or good evening, and if you inflict a *buenos dias* on the peasant he will certainly correct you with an unmistakable *buenas tardes*.

We have lingered long by the quay of Rivadasella—it has pleasant modern memories for us; but in paying a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Covadonga, we were in spirit going back to the remote past; and when we stood reverentially before the tomb of the mighty Christian chief Pelayo, the hero who gave the first great check to Moorish rule, we knew he had made Spain a nation, and immortalized himself.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BIRTH-PLACE OF SPAIN.

It was a bright autumnal morning which saw us mount one of Don Antonio Pelayo's traps, driven by a sturdy cob, and so commence our pilgrimage to the tomb of his patriotic ancestor.

We have no space to dwell on the beautiful scenery *en route*. Perhaps we have already satiated our readers with our endeavours to make them know a little of what exquisite mountain views can be seen in Northern Spain, and we will only say in regard to the road from Rivadasella to Covadonga *viâ* Cangas de Onis, that of its class it is perfect from a scenic point of view. Alternating with dense chestnut forests and shallow trout streams were the lofty rugged spurs of the Cantabrian Highlands, the seaward-bound rivers carolled at our feet, above us the birds were singing long and loudly, the warm sun was tempered by the mountain breezes, the road was a good one, and Don Antonio drove well and knew his way. Under these circumstances we enjoyed our start, and the time passed pleasantly

enough. Our genial host and Jehu (his groom behind us was, with his arms folded, sternly regarding his master's back) was instinctively communicative, and it seemed a remarkably short drive to the little known town of Cangas de Onis, where we stayed to rest and feed our horses, and gratify an appetite sharpened by the keen highland air.

On our way Don Antonio courteously saluted a highly respectable old gentleman, who, on a first floor balcony, was calmly smoking one of his morning cigarettes. On inquiry as to who the worthy old patriarch was, we were astonished to find that some fifteen years ago he was the terror of the neighbourhood as a bandit chief, but had now retired from a business which the construction of new roads and the ubiquitous civil guards had rendered a precarious, not to say a liberty-endangering occupation. His last exploit was the robbery of £400 from a mail cart, but he has never been prosecuted for his final transaction, and lives now a very retired country life. There are different ways of doing things. Had our passing acquaintance lived in England he would probably have graced the sea-side at Portland or Dover, but being a Spaniard in Spain they spend no money over him and let him be. If, however, he attempted to disturb the peace, the gentlemen of the civil guard would without mercy accelerate his joining the majority by a well-directed rifle shot. The brigands on the retired list know this well enough. Their day, at any rate in Northern Spain,

is over, and the roads are as safe as those in Kent or Hertfordshire or elsewhere in Britain.

Cangas de Onis is a quaint little town of about eight hundred inhabitants, and the chief place of a dozen communes whose united population amounts to at least 9000 souls. The murmuring Sella is crossed by a Gothic bridge, which for its boldness has, we suppose, no equal in Europe, except perhaps the famous one at Martorell in Catalonia, which is there called the Devil's. It has three ogive arches, two little and one grand one. The supports of these are set on massive rock, and it has a span of eighteen metres and twenty-one metres in height, from the mean level of the water to the keystone. The bridge is narrow with a very steep slope. The thickness of the bridge is composed solely of the masonry of the arches. Two large curtains of ivy cover the stone work from the buttresses upwards.

It is impossible to give the exact date of this great curiosity, but in the 16th century it was always spoken of as the "Old Bridge."

Not far from this relic is the famous hermitage of the Holy Cross, founded by Pelayo in gratitude for his great victory at Covadonga, and as the whole of the neighbourhood of Cangas de Onis is sacred to the memory of the founder of the Spanish Kings, we may just as well condense what is generally known of the great Asturian hero. Of the last of the Gothic kings of Spain little is known, except that they were ceaselessly fighting among themselves in

the good old fashion. Two branches of the royal family respectively, that of Chinda and Wamba, were always on the warpath after each other, and there can be little doubt that the Wamba party were guilty of betraying their country to the Moors in order to be satisfactorily revenged on the party who owned the allegiance of King Chindasvinto. This long-named potentate had a large family, the two younger sons of which were named Theodofred and Favila, and a certain King Witizia, of the Wamba party, not only ran away with Favila's wife, but caused him to be murdered; while unfortunate Theodofred had his eyes put out by Witizia's orders. Pelayo, another son of Favila, was driven into exile as the natural result of these high-handed proceedings; but Roderick, the son of Theodofred, recovered the throne by force of arms, and acting on the Mosaic theory deprived the adulterous Witizia of his sight in the same rough fashion as Witizia had treated his father.

Roderick was the thirty-fourth and last of the Gothic kings of Spain, but he offended the laws of morality to such an extent that he was driven from his throne, and assumed the garb of a monk with the name of Father Maccabee. When Pelayo raised the banner of anti-Moorish revolt, Father Maccabee joined the Christian force, and was, tradition says, present at the crowning victory of Covadonga, but what became of him afterwards nobody knows. His helmet, sword and cuirass were found, and so was his horse.

Readers of Southey and Sir Walter Scott know well the details of the vision of Don Roderick, how, in his lonely cell near Toledo, he saw pass before him the future of his country divided into three periods—firstly, the invasion of the Moors, with his own disgrace and death; secondly, the Augustan age of Spain and their conquests in the Indies; and thirdly, the decline of Spanish power, the oppression of the country by Bonaparte, and its succour by the British. According to a local tradition the last words of this last of the Spanish Gothic kings were uttered in a tomb full of snakes and adders, where he had remained for three days unhurt; but on the morning of the fourth day a hermit who knew of his strange place of retirement heard him cry out aloud, “They eat me now, I feel the adders bite.” The previous night he had passed in ceaseless prayer, and so his sin was atoned for, and he died.

According to other accounts Don Roderick died shortly after the battle at Guadalete, and therefore could not have been present, at any rate in a natural way, at the battle of Covadonga. Be this as it may, Pelayo alone determined to do battle for the independence of Christian rule in Spain, and he was well worthy of the gigantic task. To use the words of Southey:—

In him the old Iberian blood
Of old and remotest ancestry,
From undisputed source, flowed undefiled;

He too of Chindasvinto's regal line,
Sole remnant now drew after him the love
Of all true Goths. Thus by this double right, the
General heart of Spain.

Pelayo's father, Favila, was a noted huntsman, and legends of his marvellous capacity for single-handed bear killing are common enough to this day.

At the period of the Moors' most complete dominion over Spain, Pelayo, the noble scion of her ancient kings, stood almost alone in the defence of his country. Undismayed by the misfortunes of his race and people, or by the oppressive rigours of the conquerors, he never tired of rousing his brethren to a sense of their shameful condition, and stirring them up to the desire of again restoring their religion and the throne of their native rulers.

Meantime his sister Hormerinda, no less ardent and patriotic, but weaker and more short-sighted, had thought to benefit her people by sealing a compromise with the invaders. Forgetful of the religious laws which forbade such a union, she married Munuza, one of the Moorish chiefs, who reigned at Gijon, and for a few years imagined she had effected wonders, because she had induced the conqueror to mitigate his oppressions. Pelayo, however, was almost more distressed at the contamination of his sister, married to an unbeliever, than by the bondage of his fellow-countrymen; and being on the point of leading the people he had collected to an attack on the Moorish Alcázar, he

first obtained an interview with her within the king's private apartments, with the view of inducing her to abandon her infidel lord. Hormerinda, however, had chosen her path, and could not escape its leadings; the interview was both stormy and touching. Pelayo, unflinching in his morality and patriotism, could find nothing to say to her but words of reproach. And Hormerinda could only urge, that though she might have been wrong in marrying the Moor, yet, now her word and life and love were pledged to him, she could not leave him.

Munuza despised the Christians, and so Pelayo had no difficulty in gaining access to Hormerinda, accompanied by the venerable Verrmundo, his father; but a Jew in Munuza's service having betrayed the information that he had no less a person than Pelayo himself in his power, he ordered him to be captured and thrown into a dismal dungeon called a *maymorra*.

No sooner did Munuza know that he had nothing to fear from Pelayo, than it became evident his moderation towards the Christians had been dictated less by Hormerinda's representations than by dread of Pelayo's reprisals, for he now began to add without mercy to the burdens of the conquered. To crown all, he issued a decree, by which all who would not make themselves Mohammedans were declared to be slaves.

This measure completed the indignation of the Christians; and when it became known where Pelayo

was held in durance, it needed but little urging of Grandio, his brother, to lead the outraged population to the assault of the Alcáyar of Gijon.

The impetuosity of the despairing population was irresistible. Munuza, inclined to despise them at first, found himself surrounded before he was aware, and sallied out with his reserve to give life to his troops and repel the insurgents. He had no sooner left the precincts of the palace than Hormerinda took advantage of the circumstances to set free her brother, who was thus enabled to show himself at the head of his people, like a miraculous apparition, inspiring them with courage to drive all before them.

Munuza, obliged to escape for his life, re-entered the Alcáyar, where Hormerinda awaited him with feminine tenderness, desirous only to make a bulwark of her body between him and Pelayo's fury. Munuza, however, had doubtless courage, though it was the courage of an infidel, and not only refused to owe his life to the protection of a woman, but, recognizing that it was her hand alone that could have set his captive free, stabbed her and himself just in time to die at the entering feet of Pelayo and his victorious host.

This victory of the Christian arms was the first fruits of many others, which hardly fought through succeeding centuries restored at last the whole of Spain to Christendom.

This was just before the crowning victory of

Covadonga, where Pelayo, with 300 warriors, burst from the historical cave, and, according to "history" of a very wild character, destroyed 300,000 Moors. If two of the last figures were deleted the numbers would be probably correct. As it is, the most absurd estimates are made, even in modern Spanish history, as to the numbers of the Moors killed in the famous valley. For instance, Bishop Sebastian, in his work, valuable in many ways, says as sober fact that 124,000 Moors were killed in the valley of Covadonga, and 63,000 were drowned under Monte Amosa, when, according to Paulus Diaconus, the rest ran away into France, where 375,000 were killed. Another Spanish George Washington, in his guileless ignorance of the art of careful exaggeration, says that Orlando, with his own hand, killed 2,200,000 men of King Agrican's army. To use an Americanism this fairly "takes the cake;" but the statement may be studied with advantage by residents, say at Aden or the Persian Gulf. For simple coolness the Poles are not in it with the statements of the Spanish special correspondent who followed the fortunes of the Christian-chief Orlando.

But apart from these comic exaggerations of the dead list of the defeated Moors, the victory of Covadonga was a famous one, and will live for ever in Spanish history. No foolish numerical errors will ever make the student forget that in that noble valley, grandly imposing in every sense, the first serious blow was dealt out to the Saracenic invaders,

who afterwards became very chary of approaching the Highlands of Cantabria. The Moors found that the gallant mountaineers had raised the banner of independence and freedom, and also that when they boasted they were unconquered, they were as good as their word. The site of the birth-place of Spain is about three miles from Cangas de Onís, where there is an excellent hostelry kept by Señor Baldomero García Betosinario. The road follows the river Buena till it is joined by the river Deva, and at this junction is the Campo de la Jura, where Pelayo took the monarchical oath after his great victory. After the traveller has passed a very ancient house, he will enter a narrow valley, enclosed all round by mountains destitute of any vegetation but heather; and this is the place of Spanish pilgrimage. Below the village, on the right bank of the little stream, is an obelisk bearing date of 1858, erected by the Duke of Montpensier on the Campo del Rey Pelayo, where Pelayo was proclaimed king. Here the valley, which is a perfect *cul de sac*, makes a sharp turn just before the historical cave is reached, which faces east, and is excluded from view by projecting rocks. The cave itself opens to some 40 feet, and is fringed with ivy and ferns, while there is a pool of clear water. Nature and mankind in past time have done so much to glorify this most romantic spot that it does seem deplorable that the modern restorer did not share the fate of the Moors who fell here. To destroy the solemn dignity of the entrance, a

marble stair-case has been erected from the monastery adjoining, while a "carpenter's Gothic" wooden balcony is carried across in front of the inner cave. A wretched-looking low Gothic chapel replaces the curious old one, which was burnt down about a hundred years ago, and the decorations of the altar are out of all character with the surroundings of the place. The monastery itself is interesting enough, and the collection of chasubles, copes, and other vestments shown by the sacristan is well worth seeing; some of these are of the most costly material and workmanship, and are perfect gems of art. They are mostly presents to the Church of Nostra Senora del Covadonga by members of the Royal Family of Spain at different dates. Fortunately the restorer had not been allowed to "improve," in his fearful and wonderful manner, the simple tomb of the founder of the long line of Spanish kings. It is worthy of the valley, worthy of the simple-minded patriot whose ashes it contains, worthy of Spain with all her grand traditions. It is just a rock-hewn sepulchre, with no ornament but a sword of Roman pattern. As we gazed bare-headed on this simple resting-place of the hero who did so much for the land we have learned to love so well, we felt our blood flow a little quicker than usual. Thoughts of the great scene of 717 came unbidden, and visions of the fierce rush of the Gothic warriors from their romantic cave came before our eyes. To all the Spanish-speaking race—aye, to every Christian in

the world—the soil of Covadonga must be sacred ground, and the tomb of Pelayo a place of pilgrimage. The subject of the Gumbleton prize poem at St. Peter's College, Westminster, this year, was our lamented modern hero, Gordon; and the winner, Mr. H. Morgan-Brown, treats his subject in some remarkably effective stanzas. Several of these, if altered to the circumstances of Pelayo's history and nationality, well suit the memories which cling round Covadonga. We have only room for three verses :

O, doubting hearts, ye do not know
How vain a thing it is you cry !
A life like his can never die,
The great example still shall grow

And mould the heroes yet unborn,
Of other creeds and other climes,
The greatest men of later times,
The heralds of a fuller morn.

Wherever Iberia's name is known,
Where lips can frame the Spanish tongue,
Where deeds of living Faith are sung,
There Fame shall hail thee as her own.

On a rocky promontory close to the entrance of the cave is now rising a really magnificent church in the purest Gothic style, and which will cost when completed not much less than a million sterling.

Though it has not been our lot to be near there at that time, travellers should endeavour to be at Covadonga on the 8th September, when the great yearly festival takes place. The scene is most



THE TOMB OF PELAYO.

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striking ; the place is thronged for three days with peasantry, who come from immense distances, to bring offerings and fulfil vows made ; many come in their shrouds and penitents' dresses, carrying tapers. The night before, great bonfires are lit, fireworks are let off, and the people, who do not behave in an edifying manner, dance and eat and drink all night. Mass is said in the open air, and the effect is most picturesque—the rows of peasants' earnest heads, the lighted candles, vestments, and glorious scenery. The sermon is preached from a pulpit hung on to a walnut-tree. After mass, a statuette of the Blessed Virgin is carried in procession, followed by the pilgrims. It is advisable to secure rooms at the Posada beforehand, or procure an introduction to some of the clergy at Covadonga, who with great civility offer beds and their table to any travellers. The posadas are overcrowded and unpleasant on those days.

Carriages can be got at Cangas de Onis, but a bargain should be struck with the hotel- or stable-keeper. It is not everybody who will fall in with such a master of Highland Spanish politeness as our kindly host Don Antonio Pelayo. On our return ride to Cangas, after enjoying the hospitality of one of the Covadonga fathers, we passed several pilgrims *en route* for the shrine, and quaintly dressed in long black cloaks ornamented with religious medals, scallop shells and the like. In all cases the rosaries were much in evidence, but our driver had but a

poor opinion of the reality of much of the religious zeal of these travellers—who all begged for alms—Don Antonio thinking that a pleasant autumnal holiday at other people's expense was the motive for the journey.

There are many quaint sights to be seen in Cangas (which takes its name from *canicas*, *conchas*, the shell-like broken valley), but apart from the historical interest of the place, certainly the municipal lock-up deserves a line. Here, level with the street and behind some wooden rails, sat a row of prisoners who all looked the pictures of good health and spirits, and every one of whom was smoking. To our surprise, Don Antonio stopped his horse, handed the reins to one of us, descended and shook hands heartily with one of the *détenus*, and had a few minutes' conversation with him. Inquiring what his friend was in durance vile for, he laughingly replied, "Oh, only the usual thing here; too much *ginebra* or *vino tinto*, and too much use of the shillelah over somebody else's head, that's all. They are all in for some kind of spree, and they will be kept there till they get quite sober and promise never, never to do it again."

On a sierra, looking down on the little town, is the identical spot where Favila killed the celebrated bear, and not far away is the church of San Pedro, in the hamlet of Villanueva, on the capitals of a doorway of which is a representation of King Favila, a descendant of the Gothic Nimrod, being killed

while following his favourite amusement of bear-hunting.

In the pleasant open country that lies immediately to the north of Cangas de Onis, Don Antonio pointed out some really fine fields of flourishing root crops, and said that was his work. We did not understand that he had any property in the neighbourhood, but found out on inquiry that on one of his "Barcelona nut" expeditions to London, he had been requested to purchase a large quantity of Carters' seeds for a farmer friend of his, and he was evidently proud of the splendid result they presented. Our host was constantly referring to the kindness he had received in England, and the way business was conducted on this side of the "Bay," and in calm starlit evening, gave us some well-rendered snatches of English songs, to which we responded by some doubtlessly painful imitations of Asturian ballads. We had just gone as far as we thought we dare in the matter of these musical inflictions, when to our amazement the groom behind us said that he too had been in England and knew an English song. Judge of our surprise when in a clear baritone voice the stolid-looking retainer burst into—

"A starry night for a ramble,
Down the flowery dell,
'Mid the gorse and bramble,
Kiss and never tell."

When after a long ride we alighted at Don Antonio's house at Rivadasella, we had the cheerful

reflection to make that we had had an instructive, amusing, and most pleasant day. Oh! that all holiday-makers at the close of a day's outing could say the same thing.

It will be many a long day before we forget Don Antonio Pelayo, and we hope he will read these lines. Maybe if he does so he will strain his memory a second to recollect the two strangers and pilgrims he entertained in so princely a fashion, and whom he personally conducted to the tomb of his illustrious ancestor and the birthplace of Spain.

CHAPTER XXV.

ASTURIAN HISTORY AND FOLK-LORE.

WE have to go a long way back into the night of history for the origin of the aborigines of this province. In order that readers may form their own opinion as to who they were and from whence they came, we will here note some of the wild theories of various writers of the Middle and other ages.

An enthusiastic author in 1592 wrote, that Tubal, the nephew of Noah, having come with his descendants in the year 2163 B.C. to populate the Spanish peninsula, reached the region to-day called Cantabria, and, finding that the district suited him, stayed there. Being an artificer in iron, it is probable that he would have been attracted by the facilities he found for its manufacture on the spot. His mother accompanied him, and her name was Sybila Erithréa.

Noah most politely came to visit them, and here and there founded towns, and among them Santander. He also built several cities in Asturias, calling them after his own name, amongst others, Noega, Noevia,

Noela, and Noereña. Tubal died in the year 1850 B.C. and was buried in a wild spot near the Picos de Europa, and the place of his sepulture is called Tubalin even at the present day.

Osiris, King of Egypt, after nominating his queen Isis supreme regent during his absence, left Egypt attended by a numerous army, to see the world, and to teach agriculture and the use of wine and bread to its benighted inhabitants, he being the discoverer of the latter, and his queen that of the former.

After many adventures and hard travelling, he at last reached Spain, where he found the giant, Jerion, king. This giant was a tyrant, and far from being a lover of the peaceful arts which Osiris desired to teach. A quarrel resulted from their first interview, and a fight ensued, but Osiris made an end of the giant.

Desirous of returning home to Egypt, from whence he had been absent a long time, he parcelled out the Kingdom of Spain amongst the giant's three sons, under the condition that they improved on their father's mode of governing, or otherwise he would return and call them to severe account.

These three, however, continued their father's tyranny, but fearing the consequences, they suborned the Egyptian hero, Typhon (who was desirous of usurping the throne of that country), to kill Osiris, which he faithfully did.

When Isis knew of the death of her husband, she presented herself to the people, who made her suc-

cessor to Osiris in the government. To avenge his death she sent her son Horo, or Hercules, in pursuit of the assassin. He overtook him in Arabia, and, after forcing him to name his instigators, put him to death. Hercules lost no time in getting to Spain. Here he carried out his father's threat, and parcelled out the country amongst his friends and relations.

Cantabria he gave to his brother Astur, better known in history by the epithet *Hermes Trismegisto* or *Mercury*. From that time this portion of the kingdom has been called *Asturias*.

More has been written respecting the kings *Astur*, of which name there were a number; amongst them one who assisted with his troops at the second Punic war; but probably what we have above epitomized will suffice to enable our readers to come to a very decided opinion respecting the reliance that can be placed upon such very ancient history.

Judging from pre-historic remains it is probable that it was first peopled by the *Iberos*, who came from the district to-day known as *Georgia*. After quiet possession of the country for a period these were overrun by the *Celts*. The footsteps of the latter are met with here and there throughout the country, and in this province there are *dolmens* and *tumuli*.

Though a giant race—judging from some of their works, they seem to have lived peaceably—given to hunting, fishing, and cultivating chestnuts. Their hunting apparatus consisted of articles of the most

rudimentary description, and they fished in coracles—the wicker frames being covered over with skins.

Having a natural barrier on every hand, they were able to maintain their independence for ages. The Phœnicians traded and mined here during that period. The traces of those mighty navigators and miners are still extant, but they gave way to the Romans, who came as conquerors, and their vast works throughout the province remain to tell the tale of their occupation.

The Goths, on their way southward, endeavoured to pass the Cantabrian heights, but were unable to do so, although they overran the remaining portion of the peninsula. The Astures had learned worthy lessons from their whilom masters, the Romans, and held their own. Centuries passed. The country was the scene of another and more subtle invasion—that of the Moors, who came and effected a footing so firmly that it took years, aye, centuries, to turn them out again.

This footing was attained by the treason of Count Julian and the sons of Witiza, one of the Gothic kings of Spain. The first battle between invaders and invaded was fought on the margin of the Guadalete river. After eight days of hard fighting the Moors succeeded in obtaining a complete victory, and the remainder of the Gothic army dispersed.

The majority of this remnant passed into Asturias, where they were received with open arms. They assimilated with the people, and afterwards did the

province good service in the many struggles they sustained with their common enemy, the Moors.

The attempts of the latter to pass into Asturias were for a long time futile, but success at last crowned their efforts, and for a time they reigned supreme; but the excesses of their rulers caused a rising of the people, this rising ripened into a revolution, and at Covadonga a battle was fought. Pelayo headed the people, and the Moors were commanded by Munuza, the result our readers know, and this was, as we have said, the first of a continuous series of defeats which ended in the surrender of Granada and the expulsion of the Moors from Spain.

Thus Pelayo was the first king of Asturias after the reconquest of that province.

During the period of the Moorish occupation, communities of Musarabs were here and there formed amongst the mountains. These had changed their creed and had become Christians. Many of these communities remained when their compatriots were driven out. They form to-day a special feature in the country. Speaking their own dialects, intermarrying amongst themselves, and following their own traditions and usages, they are in many cases similar to crews of vessels shipwrecked on a foreign strand. One of these communities lives at Astorga, a city in the north of the province of Leon.

Any one who has travelled in northern and central Spain will have met some of the members of this community. They all dress alike: the men wear a

broad black felt hat with cords around it ; a short black cloth jacket with a row of buttons on either side ; a red vest ; a very full plaited black pair of pants reaching to the knee ; black woollen stockings and leather shoes. The buttons on vest and jacket consist of imitation or real coins : the rich use gold, the poor brass. They are met with in every seaport and fishing place, where they are occupied in the purchase and forwarding to the interior the fruits of the ocean. The men are very honest, and the women are renowned for their beauty and cleanliness. The *Astorga maragato* is unfortunately the only Musarab community whereof so much can be said in their favour. Their compatriots, as a rule, have different principles, and are notorious for their laziness and dirt ; while the physique of the *Astorga* people is healthy and robust, the majority of the other Musarabs are puny, weak, and often deformed.

After the occupation of Asturias by the Moors, the country continued to be governed by kings, who were appointed by the people, and confirmed in their position by the Caliph of Cordoba.

The country had its *fueros* or code of rights brought down from the time when the Supreme Council met under the *Carbayon*, or tree of liberty, to manage the affairs of the State.

These *fueros* were jealously guarded by the nobles. It is recorded, that in one of the northern provinces, on the occasions when the king met his council of State, the president of the council opened business,

by unrolling the charter of rights, and saying—"Señor, by this charter you see that each of us singly is your equal, but jointly we are superior to you." It is not stated whether this formed the preface to the opening discourse of the president in this province, but it is known that the nobles held to their rights with a tenacious grasp.

The kings resided and held their court at Cangas de Tineo—a clean and pleasant town to-day, surrounded by mountains, heavily wooded, and grandly picturesque.

These mountains abound in game. The brown bear, javali, and chamois, are abundant, so are pheasants, partridges, woodcock, quail, and snipe. Wolves range the mountain heights, and the rugged tops give a footing to eagles and vultures.

The river Narcea runs by the town, and salmon, trout, lampreys, pike, and eels reward the patience of Izaak's followers, and supply many a housewife with an extra course.

We do not intend writing a general history of all the kings who ruled in Asturias after Pelayo, but will only note a few, who were celebrated in their day, and who left to posterity some cause or other for remembering them.

Froila the First is reputed to have founded Oviedo, to-day the capital of the principality. He built a church there, and endowed it. He was a man of a most violent temper, always at war with his "dear neighbours" the Gallegos and Basques, and ever

jealous of his brother's influence with the nobles, which ultimately led him to cause his brother to be murdered. A conspiracy was at length formed, which resulted in the assassination of this the first and most unpleasant King Froila.

Aurelio, who succeeded him, was in everything the reverse of Froila. Astute and easy, he never fought when he could by any means avoid doing so. Although Pelayo had driven out the Moors from Asturias, still they held the neighbouring provinces, and were always ready to harass their conquerors. As fighting did not suit Aurelio, it is said that he made a compact with Abderraman, Caliph of Cordoba, to send him yearly a tribute of a hundred damsels—fifty of these were daughters of the nobles, and fifty those of plebeians or vassals—under the condition that the Caliph refrained from committing any act of hostility against the country. This monarch, strange to say, died on his bed.

A few kings followed in the succession, without having left any recorded events of importance to commemorate their reigns.

Then came another warrior, Alfonso the Chaste, who never felt at "peace," except when at the head of his troops for some bloodthirsty fighting with his enemies the Moors, or with his neighbours the Basques and Gallegos. He solicited the hand of the daughter of Charlemagne, but ineffectually. His sister having maintained illicit relations with one of his peers (resulting in the birth of Bernardo del

Carpio, the hero of the pass of Roncesvalles), Alfonso punished his sister by immuring her in a convent, and her lover by having his eyes burnt out, and locking him up in a perpetual prison in the Castillo de Luna. It will be noted that these were the vigorous days of old with a vengeance.

At length Alfonso died, and was succeeded by Ramiro, the husband of the celebrated Asturian queen Doña Urraca, of whom we shall have something to tell in the following chapter.

During the reign of this king, Gijon was the scene of the landing of a horde of Norsemen. A battle was fought on the outskirts of the town between the invaders and the Asturians; the former being handsomely whipped. Even at the present day some of the relics of this fight are now and again turned up by the cultivators of the fields, which were the scene of the struggle.

During this reign a feudal right was established under the name of the vote of Santiago, whereby the lord of the manor was entitled to certain tithes from each damsel within his manor at the time of her marriage. This tithe has very properly fallen into disuse at the present day. Spain, it is evident, invented this sort of maidenly tribute long before the "Salvation Army."

After this many kings reigned; some in continuous strife with their neighbours, others too inactive or too occupied in their own pleasures to heed the course of events: the country sometimes

merged into the kingdom of Leon—again attaining its independence, until it was merged into the general kingdom of Spain; retaining, however, the right to the first title next to the throne—that is to give to the nearest heir to that throne the title of prince of Asturias.

Feudalism prevailed throughout the middle ages in this province, to the extent of every vassal being a slave to his lord. Transfers of the soil included, too, the transfer of its tenants, being in fact a queer sort of fixture of tenure.

There are a number of ruined castles and towers throughout the country, each with its legends of cruelties committed and wrongs perpetrated; and the traditions of their ancient lord's doings are faithfully handed down by the families who live in their vicinities, all descendants of the poor vassals, who, at the time when those feudal iron hands flourished, groaned away their existence, waiting on the pleasure of their lords, but did not dare to groan aloud, under penalty of the lash, torture, or even death.

One of these towers stands not very far from Gijon. Its walls are entire, but its interior has long ago crumbled into dust. The lands which belong to it are still held in fief under conditions which are but remnants of the olden time. Cultivators pay a rent of so much corn, so many fowls, so many measures of chestnuts, and so on, and this rent has to be paid with a due observance of ancient forms. As however it is low, farmers do not complain of the custom.

From the tower under notice it is reported that there is a subterranean gallery, leading to a stream at the foot of the hill, and to another tower a long distance off. It is said that on occasional holidays, strange lights are seen out of the embrasures of this tower, and that ghostly revelries are held. The country people shiver as they pass by it even in daylight, and it would require a very strong reason to induce them to go near it after dark.

In some parts of the province remains of ancient sepulchres have been met with, probably of the Celtic period. They consist of the *kist vaen*, i.e., slabs of stone put into box shape, holding in some cases the remains of the occupant, sometimes extended at full length, sometimes in a sitting posture. Unfortunately for antiquarians, these have mostly been destroyed by their discoverers, who probably wanted to "restore" them.

Urns have been found, too, holding the ashes of some Roman occupants. They have left more lasting remains of their occupancy than their mere ashes, in the names of towns and villages—buildings yet extant in some of them—relics of their baths and mosaics—aqueducts and attle heaps, and above all their mode of cultivation of the soil, and of working in carpentry and masonry. The ploughs and harrows, the mason's and carpenter's tools are almost identical with those which were used throughout the world by the Romans; and were it possible for one

of those grim old soldiers to wake up again out of his eternal sleep and see how the world of Asturias wagged, he would hardly believe that he *had* been asleep for sixteen hundred years. Asturias is not alone in this stoppage in the wheels of progress in the arts and industries—it is almost the same throughout the peninsula.

There are still extant some very ancient roads, one running along the coast from the French frontier to Santiago de Compostella, the shrine at which pilgrim-knights and beggars alike kneeled during the crusades, and at which the *élite* and the lowly kneel now, as in days of yore. Along this road, in the mountain fastnesses, there are what are now called *hospitalets*, in all probability founded by the Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem, and each one within sight of the other. During the winter months, when hard frozen snow covered the grounds, the traveller or pilgrim looked forward to reaching these refuges, as to havens of rest, since they were certain of finding a bed, and a loaf of bread, as well as a faggot to warm themselves; and there, when overtaken by snow-storms they could rest until they were over. The buildings stand to-day, but as the road is seldom trodden except by shepherds, the custom of placing wood, hay for beds, and the loaf for the hungry traveller has fallen into disuse.

The buildings remain, however, as landmarks, and existing proofs of the hospitality of the middle ages.

Another road—the work of the Romans—runs

from Valladolid through Leon and Astorga to Pontferrada, and over the mountains to Betanzos, where it merged into other roads, constructed by the same engineers, and which run from this place in different directions, some to towns on the coast, others to the mines in Asturias.

To-day Asturias enjoys a network of good government roads, kept in excellent condition, and permitting ready transit to the greater portion of the province. Although the country has been opened up by the road system, and transit made easy, still there are some portions of the province difficult of access, owing to its topographical features, and in some of these places strange customs prevail, and almost aboriginal curiosities are to be met with.

On the borders of the river Navia, far up its course, there is a small town, that is seldom visited by any stranger. At a distance of a few miles from this place, there is another town; between the two there exists a deadly feud, and woe be to the inhabitants of the one if they are caught within the precincts of the other. They are maltreated, and often killed. As the river rushes by in its headlong course to the sea, with numerous cataracts and deep whirlpools, an easy mode for the disposal of the victims is always at hand.

We have had occasion to visit these strange villages, towns they can hardly be called. The feuds, however, only extend to each other; strangers are most hospitably received, and assisted in any way needed.

The climate of the province along the sea coast and for twenty miles inland is pleasantly warm and dry from May to November, and temperate for the remaining portion of the year. It rains often during the winter months. There is not, however, a continuous dampness or fog; and during the whole year probably there are not twenty days in which there is not some sunshine. Further into the interior, and on and about the mountains, the heat is more excessive in summer, and the cold in winter. Heavy snows fall on the mountains, and owing to the abundance of woodland, the rains in some parts of the province during autumn and winter are heavy.

In fact the country throughout is very wooded; there are large forests of pine trees, which supply the props to the extensive collieries in the Gijon district, as well as to the South Wales coal mines; there are immense chestnut trees and walnut groves, having timber that seemingly would have supplied the means of subsistence to the Celts, since amongst the chestnut trees there are some that have a trunk of over six feet in diameter. Then again there are extensive plantations of hazel, which yearly yield their quota to the support of the shipping trade of Gijon and adjacent ports, and to the indigestion of children and the toothaches of grown persons in Britain. Besides these there are extensive forests of oak, which are utilized for railway sleepers and staves in the country.

As has been above noted, the cultivation of the

soil is carried forward as it has been for many centuries. It is useless preaching rotation of crops, or best mode of manuring. As their fathers worked, so they continue, and are contented. The land is infinitesimally subdivided, so that there is no opportunity of introducing improvements upon an extensive scale, in order practically to prove the effect. The turning up of the soil is effected by a small wooden one-handed plough, having a cast-iron point; this is drawn by a yoke of oxen. The man holds the plough, whilst the housewife walks ahead, with her goad guiding the oxen. The ploughing is generally effected to a depth of from six to nine inches.

Manure is prepared by cutting the furze, heather, or any other brush from the nearest hill, carting it to a marshy or muddy spot in the country roads, and spreading it there like a carpet, to be trodden over until it has been disintegrated. Stables are only cleaned out once or twice yearly, with the natural result that dirt is of course abundant, but the farmers do not know how to place it at its best, and where it would be found beneficial. Lord Palmerston said once that dirt was matter in the wrong place. The Asturian farmer is very careful to see that such is the case. The carts are similar to those used by the Romans twenty centuries ago.

Crops consist of maize, rye, and *scanda*, or red wheat. Sowing time is a busy one. One neighbour helps the other, and so on collectively in each operation until the grain is marketed or reduced to

flour. When the young shoot is up, all the available women and men of the district take in hand the operation of thinning it and weeding it, and, in case of maize, of drawing up the soil about the stem or stalk. They go from one field to the other until all is done. The first crop ready for harvest is the *scanda*,

Again there is a collection of neighbours, every two carry a large basket made of split wood, and with a couple of short rods in their hands they proceed to strip off the heads of corn into the basket, trampling the straw under foot.

When the grain has all been thus collected, the men enter with scythes, and cut the straw, which is piled for winter fodder. The rye is harvested in the same way. Shortly before the maize grain has hardened the people enter, and cut the stalks at the butt. These are collected into sheaves and piled on end. After they have been thus piled for some time, until the grain is ripe and hard, they again set to, and pull off the ears, carting them to their respective houses and hanking them. After this, the strings or hanks are hung around the outside of the granary under the eaves, where they remain until required for use.

By the time the maize is housed, it is time to attend to the chestnuts. These are beaten from the trees by long rods, collected and piled in the open until they burst their hedgehog skins, after which they are collected and stored in the granary or sold.

No sooner are the chestnuts down, than it is time

to collect the apples into the *lagares*, which are the cider presses. Asturias manufactures a very large quantity of this liquor, and drinks it too, although a portion is exported to the Antilles. This in fact is the favourite beverage of the people, but it is *anis*—a miserable concoction of potato spirit (imported from Hamburg) with the essence of aniseed—that is the cause why there is such a great amount of drunkenness in the province.

The people of Asturias live as it were in communities during the whole year, because when all the fruits are housed, the *bees* commence, and we use the word in its American sense. At night the neighbours meet in one house or the other, to strip the maize from the ears. These occasions are generally accompanied by dancing for the younger people to the sound of the *gaita* or the tambour, varied by stanzas sung by one of the dancers, and taken up by the others in turn. The meetings or feasts are never known to degenerate into brawls, but are kept up harmoniously throughout the beeing, which continues until each farmer in turn has been cheerfully helped with his thrashing. Helpings of this sort are called in the country the *esfoyaza*.

Churches and hermitages dot the country everywhere, but are not as they are in Castille—vast feudal constructions, overshadowing and chilling the pigmy houses that surround them, but small buildings with nothing showy on the outside, and which are filled with congregations much more earnest

and devout than those of the more showy edifices of the other provinces.

Each village church has of course its patron saint, and its saint's day is kept by a general reunion of all the people in the respective parishes. At these gatherings, a merry trade is driven by cider sellers, mountebanks, and merry-andrews; sweet sellers, musicians and beggars. Once that mass is over, the day is given up to enjoyment. Cooking places are improvised, and tents are not absent; there is a general slaughter of poultry, and everybody eats and drinks. Then dancing commences. All the available fiddlers and *gaita* players are secured, and rings of dancers are soon formed around them. If there is a scarcity of these discoursers of sweet music, a tambour sets hundreds dancing, and those who cannot procure even that, dance to the sound of their own sweet voices. The whole takes place in some field or other enclosure, in the vicinity of the church. As evening sets in, each beau claims his belle, and home they all go, grateful for a day's enjoyment if the weather has been fine, and hopeful, if it has rained, that the next *romeria* will turn out better. There is one peculiarity about the ending of these *romerias* that should be noted: any young person who may have made an enemy of another before that day, has it in his or her power to become again friendly after this. As above stated, these *romerias* are high days for sweet sellers. Any person desirous of conciliating another, purchases sweets at

the *romeria*, and takes them in person, and presents them to the offended party. They are not refused, as it is understood that they must be accepted; they are peace offerings which enable even enemies to shake hands and again be friends. In Asturias, sweets purchased with that object are called *perdones*.

San Juan is a very celebrated saint in this province. On this saint's eve, young ladies, and believers in the traditions attached thereto, place chestnuts under their pillow, when they dream of their swains; if they shall be married before the next anniversary, or if they are in the unfortunate position of having no swain, they endeavour by other rites to dream of the one they hope to have. This in fact is the most weird night of the year. Then spirits come from air and earth, fairies dance their sprightly dances in the *atalayas*, and all things in the natural, and the supernatural order too, we presume, bear testimony to something or other. We have had it seriously stated to us on more than one occasion, that at midnight on this particular eve, all water is turned into the finest old wine. Asturian toppers watch for the moment when they can drink their fill free of expense, but if they have not managed to do that at an earlier hour, they always miss the moment when the spell is on, and we have never heard of even one who succeeded in securing the gratuitous juice of the grape. Another charming legend is that if a new-laid egg be placed on the window-sill, outside, the

hen that laid it having been killed with many conjurations, and it be taken in, *exactly* at the moment the first ray of the sun's light strikes the earth on the following morning, its yolk will have been transformed into a most beautiful miniature ship in full sail. We have not yet tried the experiment, and have never seen that ship.

Carnival is also a busy time in Asturias. Formerly greater license was permitted to masquers than now, and jokes were sometimes carried to very foolish lengths. It was the custom for masquers to take with them any quantity of soot, which they threw over people against whom they had a spite ; but this most reprehensible fashion of clothes-destroying has been put down by the thumping help of good oak staves.

There is a general belief in the existence of fairies, and many are the tales that are told by sexagenarians, of their treatment by these ; how that they have unwarily stepped into their *atalayas* (rings) on St. John's eve, and have been unable to extricate themselves until daybreak, and how that they had been teased throughout the night by their sprightly though invisible enchainers ; how the fairies have an important influence over cattle, sometimes playing pranks, and stopping their milk, to the horror of the good housewife, at other times doubling its abundance to her delightful surprise. These fairies, or *xanas* as they are called, are believed to hold the secrets of where treasures are

hidden, and they sometimes communicate that secret to lucky man.

The evil eye is another article of belief, and its maleficent effect on children and cattle. To preserve children from its blight, jet armlets called *ciguas*, were formerly put upon their wrists. Then again there are white ladies, who waste their time in roaming about the world at midnight, seemingly with no other object than to frighten silly men.

Some years ago, one of the foremen at a colliery in Langreo was returning home after paying a visit to some friends, who lived at a distance of about two miles from his place.

The night was dark and windy ; he could, however, trace his way by the fitful light of some blast furnaces in the vicinity, and near which he had to pass. As he neared a dark portion of the road, he could see some object moving in the direction he was going, and he felt terribly afraid. All the tales he had ever heard respecting *xanas diaños* and of all the mighty army of supernatural imaginings came into his head, and his fear soon compelled him to fairly take to his heels and run. Shortly afterwards he stumbled and fell. On getting up he glanced round, and again saw the same dreaded object, at about the same distance from him as before. He again started off, fear lending him wings, and he continued running until he came to a part of the road well lighted up by the flames of the furnaces. Here he took courage, and faced round, finding himself followed not by his

own shadow, but by his own donkey. He utilized his quadruped, and again started for home, thankful for the ass's company, and thinking that for that night at least his troubles were over.

However he had not proceeded far when he saw naked lights approaching. On their nearing him, he could see that they were large candles carried by a number of people. It at once struck him as strange, that candles could be so carried on such a stormy night. He and his donkey commenced to tremble; and neither moved until the weird procession passed. The crowd were accompanying a funeral, and as they went by, he noticed that they were all known to him, some being his neighbours, and many of them had been dead for years.

This fairly doubled him up, so to speak, and he was so frightened that he lost all consciousness of what followed until the following morning. Somehow he reached home and retired to bed, but the apparition of that funeral was distinctly remembered by him when he awoke. He went to visit his neighbours, and told them what he had seen. They laughed at him, and remarked that it was more than probable that his friends had very strong cider, and plenty of *anis*.

The bat is considered a biped of ill omen, and a house where one enters will lose one of its members by death, hence of course the stampede at Potes before referred to.

Witches are believed in even to-day by the illite-

rate portion of the inhabitants, and they are supposed to hold their Sabbaths at Sevilla, where they arrive, accompanied by their familiars, mounted on brooms.

Such are some of the items of the folk-lore of this province. Of course the beliefs in apparitions, &c., are those held by the illiterate mass throughout the country who have not come in contact with populous industrial centres; these have advanced with the age, and here such beliefs are—although known to all—a thing of the past.

Asturias is one of the Spanish provinces most noted for its industries. The abundant coal mines in the Gijon district permit the development of its other natural resources. It is noted for its mineral wealth, having numerous rich copper ore deposits and lodes, some partially opened up, others not worked at all, as well as extensive calamine, manganese and rich iron ores in a similar position. The reason of this is evident. The country to within the last few years was but little known; the difficulty of transit prevented general exploration by strangers; the road system is comparatively very recent, and since the construction of these roads, want of direct railway communication with the centre of Spain has been an obstacle to the visits of "prospecting" strangers. Thanks to Mr. Donon, the railway has been effectually carried over the Pyrenees and is now in work; at present, therefore, there is no reason why the copper and other mines should not

be taken up by English capitalists, since they are within easy reach of a shipping port and within a few days' distance from England.

Owing to the agitated state of the province during the middle ages, convulsed as it continually was, either by internal strifes between the nobles and their rulers, or the nobles and the Church, or by fights for liberty and the recovery of the soil from the Moorish conquerors, as well as from other invaders, the safety of life and property was often very problematical, and when a town was conquered, pillage and rapine were of course the order of the day.

To save their treasures the rich amongst the inhabitants often buried their wealth in out-of-the-way places, hoping to be again able to recover it at some future day. All landmarks that remained to tell the tale were traditions handed down by hearsay. It sometimes happens that even at the present day these treasures are unearthed where and when least expected, and the tiller of the soil is enriched by finds that he never dreamed of. The traditions which exist respecting the places where these treasures are buried in special localities form a long chapter of the folk-lore of the residents of many localities in Asturias, and the searching for them causes many a disappointment to their very earnest seekers.

The ancestors of these residents dug and delved for them, but failed to find anything. These follow

in their footsteps, and dig too, going over the same ground again and again; but all to no purpose. They tire for a while, and allow the tradition to lie dormant; it again wakes up—an idea strikes one of the old men of the place, there is little to do on their farms at the time, and they once more take up their picks, and go in for finding the treasure, and generally with a like result. There is hardly a district that has not its tradition of buried wealth, and hardly a district, too, wherein this wealth has not been sought for, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred in vain.

Within a distance of thirty-five miles from Gijon, there is a government gun factory—we refer to that of Trubia. This is situated in a valley through which two rivers wend their way, and merge into one, at a short distance from the factory.

The valley is well sheltered on every side by high hills, well wooded, and from the beginning of spring to the end of autumn the scenery is very beautiful. Here and there extensive limestone masses crown the hills, and, underlying these, there are heavy deposits of quartzite. There are indications of ancient workings in these deposits, in more than one place, and a rumour is current, too, that gold has been found in and about these workings.

An old gentleman, who lived in the vicinity of this factory, had—when a youth—been imbued with the traditions of buried treasure in and about some of these ancient diggings, but these traditions did

not go so far as to point out the exact spots where this had been effected. He was a good Latin scholar, and had studied for the Church.

Amongst the properties that were left him by his parents on their demise, he found an old black-letter book of necromancy in Latin. This he paid very special attention to, and read and studied it, until at length he firmly believed its doctrines and theories, and thought he could at any time "call spirits from the vasty deep," not for a moment doubting but that "they would come at his command," provided he exactly followed the instructions and rules laid down in his musty book of lore, for the calling up of the said spirits.

Some attempts were made by him in and around the ancient workings, to find either coined gold, or even gold in ingots or dust, but without any other result than sheer disappointment.

As a last resource he determined to call to his aid one of the trusty spirits which his book recommended under such circumstances, and of which it gave numerous instances.

Amongst many others, he read in his book that on the eve of the battle of Naseby, on the night of the 13th of June, 1645, Cromwell and his adjutant had gone into a wood, where they met a snuff-coloured old gentleman carrying a small box under his arm, out of which he drew a parchment, which was duly signed by Cromwell with his own blood, and, by which signature, he ensured victory on the follow-

ing day, and power for an expressed term of years. These instances were, to our friend, sufficient proof of the ability of the oddly-coloured gentleman; and, if he were once able to come in contact with him, or any of his ghostly brood, he did not doubt that they would point out to him the desired spots.

As he was not disposed, however, to pay the price that was said to have been paid by Cromwell, and many others, he, for a long time, held back from commencing his conjurations.

At length by hard study, and re-perusing, he persuaded himself that he had discovered a way, whereby he could satisfy his wish, without any personal risk to himself, by raising a familiar spirit, and compelling it, by the force of his own will, to disclose the whereabouts of the long-desired treasures.

A beautifully calm summer night was chosen for the mighty performance of holding communion with the inhabitants of the nether world. The ripple of the water in the river, as it softly rebounded from the banks, and the chirp of the cricket in the grass, with here and there the bell-notes of the tree-frog, were the only sounds that disturbed the silence. The moon had disappeared behind the hills, and the weird hour of midnight was approaching.

Our friend, hugging his ponderous volume, was followed by a small boy carrying an iron pot and tripod, with sundry ingredients cunningly prepared, and he again preceded nine young damsels, each

holding in her hand a large unlighted wax candle, wended their ways to the centre of a large meadow in the vicinity.

On arriving there, he placed his tripod, pot, and damsels in position, the former in the centre of a ring formed by the latter, who stood facing outwards.

A great deal of persuasion had been necessary to induce the timid girls to venture upon such a sacrilegious expedition, but the promise of a large share of the treasure, and the innate curiosity inherent to the weaker sex, at length overcame their scruples, and although they doubtless quaked with fear, still there they were. As the dread hour of midnight was being struck by a clock in a church tower some distance off, the requisite ingredients to fill the conjurer's pot were thrown in and lighted. A ring was marked with certain weird and cabalistic characters, outside of that formed by the damsels, whose tapers were duly lighted at the burning pot. They were enjoined as a matter of course to keep within the cabalistic ring, and, let the appearances be what they may, they were not to step outside of that enchanted line that surrounded them.

The conjurations were commenced with great energy, the small boy keeping the pot burning by occasional stirring, but nothing appeared.

The would-be spirit raiser feared he had omitted some rite of ceremony, and referred to his book. Everything was found, however, to be exactly as

ordered, and in its place. He commenced a second time his conjurations, and accompanied them by carefully walking round the inside of the enchanted ring. This had continued for some time without any result, but at length a noise was heard, that froze every one with terror. A noise something similar to a roar, followed by a tremendous snort! The ground began to vibrate, and a heavy body was heard to be approaching. It came on and on, until it was within the light of the candles. There it stopped to gaze. It appeared to have an enormous head and horns. Of course the girls were prepared to drop their candles and run, when they first heard the noise, but their very fears held them spell-bound, and made them unable to move. A snort from the apparition broke the spell, and, with an unanimous shriek, they dropped their candles, and ran like frightened sheep. In their blind hurry they overturned the old man and his tripod. His pot-fire went out, scalding the lad, who fled for his life, and he was left in darkness, and afraid to move. The enchanted ring having been broken, he momentarily expected to find himself caught up by the apparition, and hurried away. His terror at length caused him to lose all consciousness for a short time. When he came to himself, he found that he was surrounded by several cows. The lights and figures in the meadow, at that hour, had aroused their curiosity, and they had come to see for themselves what was the matter.

Of course the old man had his doubts respecting

the identity of the apparition, that frightened away his companions, and the girls could never be persuaded that they had been frightened almost out of their wits by some old cows, but set the apparition down to His Satanic Majesty in person.

The aged student of necromancy firmly believed that if the girls had not fled he would have obtained the secret of the treasure he was seeking, and in this belief he died, as he was never able to persuade other nine damsels to accompany him to go over his magical process again.

CHAPTER XXVI.

IN SEARCH OF COPPER.

IN the preceding pages we have so often insisted on the vast potential wealth of the Picos de Europa, especially from the mineralogical point of view, that we make no apology for giving here our adventures with a mutual English friend, who in search of copper ascended the higher Picos from the southern side in the June of last year.

The friend we accompanied is a professed mining expert and an engineer of repute, and to those who wish to find out for themselves as to the value of the Picos we could not wish a pleasanter, a more instructive or reliable guide. The reason why the journey was undertaken was the discovery of a large stone in the hands of an illiterate Asturian peasant who had received it from some other countryman in the more remote villages of the Picos. The stone weighed about fifty-six pounds, and after it came into the possession of our friend was for a time cast aside as a mere mountain "curio," but a period of enforced idleness, or rather leisure, supervening, it was duly assayed and found to contain thirty-four per cent. of

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copper, with a very small trace of iron—its appearance being that of a piece of red hermatite ore, striated with beautiful crystals of malachite.

As some time had elapsed since the specimen had reached us, and we had practically forgotten our informant's name, we determined to visit the southern Picos themselves, and find out where more of this valuable ore was to be found. Accordingly, having secured some indifferent specimens of the genus *ίππος*, and a guide who knew the wild mountain tracks, we started.

For the first few miles our road lay by a very turbulent and noisy stream rushing down a ravine, and the sources of which, by the way, are to be found near the villages of Bulnes and Sotres already referred to. As on the eastern side of this marvellous range you are soon out of all sight of human habitation, but now and again we were reminded of the living world by the swoop overhead of some large-sized vultures, who were more frightened than hurt by our revolver practice directed against them.

After journeying upwards for some hours we came to a pleasant green valley, well watered and covered with luxuriant vegetation, dotted throughout its entire length by cattle grazing quietly. These strange oases in the Picos are quite a feature of the Cantabrian mountains. Close by were the shepherds' shelters, and these consisted of rude huts built and roofed with the surrounding limestone, without mortar or any other mixture, each boasting a

doorway of about four feet high. As we were on an exploring expedition we determined to find out all we possibly could about these shepherds and their ways.

On making our wishes known, one of them, who seemed to be the patriarch, invited us to enter. We found a hearth made also of a few pieces of stone, and a wood fire burning. In one corner there was a large wooden vessel, in the rough form of an *amphora*. Here, we were informed, the product of the morning's and evening's milking was put, until a sufficient quantity had accumulated to permit the process of cheese-making.

The milk was curdled by the dipping into it of a calf's gall, and the curd separated and placed in a small wooden vat. This was pressed by heaping large blocks of stone on to it. Thus then was made the very celebrated Cabrales cheese which formerly we had delighted in, but which brings an emphatic "I pass" ever since we found out the process of its manufacture.

On one side of the hut were several berths, one above the other. Here, we were informed, all the members of the family slept at night, both male and female.

The cattle are driven up to these oases in the mountains in April, and in the case of those that are fed for the shambles, remain there up to the date of some celebrated fairs in one or other of the adjacent provinces, or until one in September for the milch

cows and calves. The pastors take it in turn to go to the nearest villages to procure supplies. They are kind and hospitable to strangers, but are very ignorant and excessively dirty.

As we had a long way yet before us we could not spare the time necessary for further observations in this spot, and we soon left the happy valley behind us, and again commenced to climb.

As we had to the present passed the time admiring nature's face, we thought it now convenient to examine more closely the rocks that surrounded us on either side, with a view to ascertain their age. We had not to go far before we were rewarded for our trouble by finding an *ammonite*, protruding from the face of a limestone mass. This having been weather-worn, we could not distinguish its species ; but we soon met with another which, by careful picking away of the enclosing rock, we discovered to be a *bifrons*. We were also successful in securing portions of a *Belemnites sulcatus*. Thus we had proof that, as we had already presumed, we were passing through a section of the lower lias.

By and by we found ourselves in a most dangerous position ; the path we followed lay along the border of an immense precipice, having a sheer fall of at least five hundred feet, to a torrent which in some places had cut itself a way through the limestone, having a width of only about thirty feet. Our horses quietly found their way without either stumbling or trembling.

At length however we reached a place where the way had been cut through the rock, leaving an overhanging semi-arch of only about eight feet high. The push of a finger would have been almost sufficient to hurl both horse and rider to the torrent below. The height of the overhanging rock had not been calculated for men on horseback to pass. The width of the road was barely nine feet. There was almost as much danger in endeavouring to dismount, as in attempting to pass, but it was decided to try the former. This was effected with safety, and men and nags passed through the jaws of death, thankful for their lucky escape.

Wending our way upwards, we shortly came to a spot where there were five rude crosses carved on the rock. Our guide informed us that some winters ago, several shepherds sought shelter under this rock from a terrible snowstorm. They sheltered too long, since the increased weight of the snow mass on the mountain-side, far up above their heads, caused a loosening of the rocks. These commenced to roll, taking with them the immense body of snow, loosening further rock on their way, crushing and tearing everything before them; soon the avalanche reached the spot where the unlucky pastors were resting, and, catching up five of them in its whirl, they were carried away down in its embrace to the depths below, crushed and mangled, there to lie until the spring thaw permitted their relatives to recover their remains, and to give them Christian burial. In memoriam they

carved there five crosses, in passing which, good Catholics will say a short prayer for the souls of the unfortunate men. When on the spot it was easy enough to picture the whole scene of terror and death.

Farther up, our guide pointed out to us a place where a snow-slip had picked up a woman in its course and carried her down to the ravine, a depth of about one hundred feet, and from which, notwithstanding her leap, she escaped almost unhurt, and is reported to be alive to-day, and ready to express her sentiments touching that journey upon such a white horse.

The immense limestone masses opened out on either side grander and higher, as we went forward. In some spots we could see abundant vegetation ; here and there these had goats browsing or frisking on them, and which at the height they stood, appeared to us like overgrown rabbits.

Higher still we could see a small herd of chamois, with sentinel set, standing out clear between us and the sky, whose signal whistle of danger we could hear, owing to the rarity of the atmosphere, even at that distance.

This was immediately responded to by a scamper of the herd, who seemed literally to spring up the sides of the rock higher and higher, and holding on to "nothing at all," until they disappeared from view.

At length a heavy Scotch mist closed out the scenery, and compelled us to attend solely to where we trod.

Fogs are generally unpleasant, but in our very peculiar position, this fog was worse than unpleasant—it was positively dangerous. We had no other resource, however, than to trudge along and “make the best of it,” and when thoroughly drenched we reached the village of Bulnes.

Bulnes, even in sunny weather, cannot be considered a pleasant or even pretty village. In the midst of fog and rain, it was simply miserable. As, however, it was the only place where the night could be passed, we had to call all our courage to our aid, resign ourselves to the course of circumstances, and hope for better times.

We found out the *alcalde's* house, and solicited shelter. (Food we had taken with us.) This was accorded with a good grace. Our host was the proprietor of a numerous flock of small black sheep and goats, and we found this to be the case with every villager. As we arrived at the village the shepherds were returning from the pastures, leading in their flocks.

We have heard a great variety of noises in our different rambles—machinery groaning—locomotives shrieking—lions roaring—elephants trumpeting—wolves barking—and cats *ad libitum* discoursing sweet music—but the *ba'ing* of the Bulnes flocks beats all these combined. It is not to be wondered at that the wolves from their fastnesses come down at night to try and pacify them; still this makes matters all the worse, since it sets off barking a hundred lusty

sheep and wolf dogs. All these things prevent any one from sleeping, who has not been inured to the infamous noise from the time they were babes in arms.

The modern architecture of Bulnes, like the huts of the pastors, is of rather a primitive order of four walls and a roof, no chimneys, no windows; a doorway, sometimes having a door hung on hinges, and others handy by, to be put up at night, and when needed.

Then a large heap of ashes is on the centre of the floor, having some smouldering embers kept warm by it; at cooking time brushwood and roots of heather and other shrubs are added. This fuel being damp yields an acrid smoke, pungent to the eyes, and unbreathable until one becomes very accustomed to it.

Our first experience caused us all to rush into the open air, and to have a hearty cry. Having relieved our oppressed eyelids, we felt better, and went back; but whether it was that the smoke had subsided, or that we had got hardened to it, we did not feel it so oppressive afterwards.

There was a bench of masonry raised about eighteen inches all around the sides of the room, and on this we sat together with the members of the family.

Supper having terminated, all retired to rest, our beds consisting of straw pallets laid on the masonry bench. And here too our host and his family stretched themselves, and sweetly snored themselves to sleep.

In our conversation with our host prior to retiring to rest, we dropped upon the trail of the man who had given us the copper sample. He resided within easy reach of Bulnes, but followed two occupations, which often took him from home, being a chamois hunter, and when not thus engaged, he used to go down to the Liebana valleys on the other side of the mountains to purchase butter from the farmers, and which he sold to a butter-curer in Asturias.

It was known in the village that this stone had been found, but by whom no one could say.

We had no resource therefore but to find the butter-man, and obtain from him that information, and this we determined to do in the morning.

Daybreak saw us afoot. The fog had disappeared, and the morning air was so pure and bracing that it had the effect of elevating our spirits, and of causing us to feel as if we should like to jump over a gate, but there was no gate to jump over.

We could now examine the place at leisure.

There are two villages of the same name within a short distance of each other, separated by a brawling stream, the same that we had followed in our route. In the centre of one of these there is a round tower, having an interior diameter of about forty feet. The stones in its construction are joined together by a hard cement, like that of the Romans. A portion of the wall had fallen, but there was no crumbling of that or any other part of the building. There is no tradition or legend attached to it, within the

knowledge of the Bulnes inhabitants; these, like its origin, have been lost in the night of history.

No strangers had entered Bulnes before within the memory of the oldest inhabitant, and we were therefore regarded with such curiosity as we ourselves should doubtless feel in the presence of visitors from some other planet.

We found that our man had been seen the day previous on the Amuesa mountain, where he intended passing the night in order to meet the chamois at early dawn, and we lost no time in starting for the spot, which was indicated to us by our worthy host.

After a long march, always upward, we at length espied the hunter, on his way home, with his gun in hand, a chamois weighing about fifty pounds across his shoulders, and followed by two fine dogs.

Surprise at the meeting in such an out-of-the-way place having been duly expressed, we broached the subject that had brought us there. The men pointed to a mountain height at some distance, still snow-covered, and informed us that there, in an opening between the limestone beds, the stone had been picked up. "There were plenty more," he said, "some in lumps, and some soft and earthy," and undertook to lead us to the spot as soon as the snow would permit, and with this we had to remain content.

He pressed us to accompany him to his house, and taste the steaks he would prepare for us, cut from the game he carried. However, we were desirous of passing over the mountain and of reaching a village

on the other side, and therefore excused ourselves for our inability to accompany him. He pointed out to us the Aliva mountains, where such abundant masses of white calamine are met with, and are now being worked; and in that district too there is a small lode of black oxide of cobalt, worked by a Santander firm, the product of which is exclusively sold in the country to the terra-cotta and coarse ware manufacturers. With the calamine are found masses of blende, brown, crystalline, and semi-transparent, and here and there lodes of lead and manganese, and lodes and bonanzas of copper.

Having obtained the positions of the respective localities of these deposits, as well as other information that may yet be of service to us when things are better in the "City," we bade our informant a good day, and again started on our journey.

As we neared the top of the mountain, our route became less perilous and easier, and we were able to make "good way." Our descent on the other side, however, counterbalanced the ease we had enjoyed. Here again were rock masses to drag our weary quadrupeds through, worse even than in our ascent on the other side, but the scenery was not so grand, and by no means so interesting.

After stumbling along on our way, footsore and weary, for a long time, we came within sight of extensive workings. These we found to be connected with a calamine mine of great value. Some eight hundred tons of ore, selected and ready for

shipment, lay on the floors, and had lain there for some two years or more. This ore had been taken out from several large water-worn caverns in the limestone, which had been filled up with the deposition of the calamine. The greater portion of the mass consisted of perfectly white calamine. There were blocks of ore, measuring over a cubic yard, and which, on being assayed, yielded 54 per cent. zinc; and the rubbish heaps alone would well repay being picked over. The limestone is Jurassic, and we noticed that wherever there was a surface breakage of this, from water wearing or disrapture, there calamine existed in large or small quantities.

The distance from this mine to the town of Cerbera de Pisuerga is about ten miles. The road in summer is bad enough; in winter it is impassable owing to want of bridges over what in summer are small streams, but in winter are respectable rivers. From Cerbera to the railway station of Aguilar de Campoó there is a good Government road, and the distance is fifteen miles. Energy, and a judicious outlay of capital, would, in the working of this mine, result in a thorough success.

Here we bade adieu to our guide and our patient coursers, and continued our journey on foot to the small hamlet of Triollo, which we reached thoroughly tired and hungry, and found this place to be far better than Bulnes. We lodged at the house of the *alcalde*, who was a person who thought "no small beer" of himself, and of the responsi-

bilities attaching to his important office, in these mountain fastnesses.

Here we noticed a couple of storks, who had their enormous nest in a large bay-tree in the *alcalde's* garden.

"That nest," says he, "existed there when my great-grandfather was born; no one ever disturbs the birds. They go away at the beginning of winter with their young ones, and always return again in the spring alone."

He firmly believed that these were the two identical birds that were present at the birth of his great-grandfather. Why these birds should have selected the village of Triollo as their haven and breeding-place is a mystery we leave to those learned in bird-lore to solve.

We went to Cerbera, thence by Government road, skirting the foot of the Picos, to Panes, passing on our way the celebrated copper pyrites mines at Carracedo, one of which is now being extensively worked by a Spanish company.

The Picos de Europa and their offshoots or spurs are teeming with mineral deposits. They have yielded immense returns to several companies—Spanish, French, and Belgian, but to the present time only particular districts have been explored. Other localities will at a future day yield quite as much, perhaps more.

CHAPTER XXVII.

UNSOUGHT-FOR WEALTH.

THE word wealth brings to the mind thoughts of riches of various descriptions; and the ways of obtaining wealth are very various too. We will confine ourselves to that produced from or by the mineral resources of the Cantabrian provinces.

Ancient authors wrote respecting it, and, in perusing their writings and noting the vast sums in gold and other metals that were yearly transmitted from the peninsula to Rome, it has often struck us as surprising that at the present day the sources from whence all these riches proceeded are secret and undiscovered.

The remains of the workings of the mighty miners of bygone ages remain, and it is with some of these, as well as with fresh fields, we intend dealing in this chapter.

The Phœnicians and Carthaginians worked here, and some of their mines were left undisturbed after they had left the country until a recent date. In others they were followed by the Romans, and they again by the Moors.

The Phœnicians mined both for gold and copper, and the following instances bear evidence of this fact.

An ancient mine was discovered in 1864 through the washing away of débris by a mountain torrent. An opening to an immense cave was laid bare, and on inspection this was found to have been formed by the excavation of a mass of copper and cobalt ore.

Its walls and roof were spotted throughout by ore, except in places where it had been covered over by a thick coating of crystallised calcite. This cave has a length of over eighty metres, a breadth of thirty, and a height of twenty-five. Its cubic contents being about 60,000 cubic metres, it will readily be believed that the entire mass consisted of copper and cobalt ores, and its weight would exceed 150,000 tons. A gallery has recently been driven at a depth of forty metres below the floor of this cave, through the continuation of the same shoot of ore, and has proved the mine to be of great value.

From the cave small irregular galleries radiate into the mountain, following branches of ore.

These galleries were found to have been worked in a very primitive manner. Their floors were, for the most part, covered over by a hardened coating of soot, which in some places was four inches in thickness, and their walls showed everywhere traces of fire. On breaking up the flooring of soot, great numbers of rounded stones were found; many with grooves around them, where the withe would have been twisted, to form a handle for its manipulation.

These stones would have been used to beat down the ore, after that it had been first heated, and then cooled again.

Careful investigation followed the discovery of this cave and its galleries. In one of these, remains of small furnaces were found, and near these lay quantities of material prepared for the furnaces ; the ore had been pulverised, then mixed with a gangue and pine charcoal, and made up into masses of about five to ten pounds each. Thus were they found after having lain *in situ* for more than twenty-five centuries.

No other tools of any description, nor coins, nor other trophy or token of antiquity, have been met with.

When these miners worked, pine-trees grew on the surrounding heights. All has changed ; pines have disappeared altogether, and are not found within a distance of fifty miles.

Another of these ancient mines was accidentally discovered in 1851, within a distance of six kilometres of the sanctuary of Our Lady of Covadonga. At the time of its discovery it was considered to be the most ancient mine known.

An eminent Spanish engineer wrote respecting its discovery as follows :—“ Amongst the rubbish there were no tools of iron or any other metal found, neither lamps, nor any object of baked clay, or to be baked. What was observed was a great number of points of deer horns ; and through their being so

worn, it was deduced that they had been used as points for scratching and loosening. The hammers were made of the thick parts of the same horns. Five of these were found, one of which had been pointed at one end. It could be seen that they had been very much used. One of these exists at present in the Madrid School of Mines, and Mr. Busk, to whom I showed it, told me that the horn from which they had been formed was without doubt that of the *Cervus elaphus*. The eye is well cut and quadrilateral, so that the handle would have been of wood cut down to fit. There were also found a great number of large pebbly quartzite stones, the largest of which weighed eighteen pounds, and the smallest about three pounds. The greater number had an oval form, with flattened faces. Around their smallest circumference they had a space sunk, three to four centimetres in width, and from two to five millimetres in depth. This would probably have been done with a view to securing them with a cord, or to tie them, so as to make them more manageable to beat down the rock, after that it had first been attacked by fire. With regard to the hammers and the points of horn, I believe they would be principally employed to loosen out and dig the ore which was embedded in a reddish clay or in a decomposed limestone. These would have been in most cases sufficient to effect this, with the assistance, when necessary, of the oval pebbles. The only ones of these points and hammers that

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were found in a good condition, were found amongst charcoal, or in the ore; those found elsewhere pulverised on being touched. A large quantity of charcoal, soot, and ashes was found at the bottom of the excavations. Undoubtedly the time at which this mine was commenced is very remote, and will probably reach back to the transition period of the stone age to that of bronze. It appears this is the most ancient mine whereof there is any advice."

There is a similarity in the mode of working, and tools employed, to those of the first instance, and in all probability they would have been worked simultaneously.

We have carefully inspected this mine. The ore is a very rich carbonate and grey copper (tetrahedrite), and occurred in bonanzas, several of which would have yielded from three to five thousand tons each. These occur one below the other, and were joined one to the other by leaders or strings of copper.

The lowest point to which they have been yet worked is 1550 feet above the sea-level, and more of these remain to be taken out. The western part of this province has been very extensively mined by the ancients. In one place immense excavations have been made, and at the entrance to one of the galleries, there is a serpent sculptured, or otherwise formed, on either side.

These workings were effected in the search for gold.

There is an aqueduct over six miles in length, of

Roman construction, to bring water to the spot. Large quantities of the precious metal would have been taken away, and doubtless large quantities still remain.

The inhabitants of the village near these excavations avail themselves of this source of wealth. During the heavy rains, the water washes quantities of débris from the side of the hill, and when these rains are over, the proprietors of the lands through which the muddy streams have flowed, lose no time in searching for the grains and nuggets that have come down. They are often very successful, and rarely search without finding some gold.

Some years ago in this district, a poor and forlorn old widow was driving in her cattle from the pasture. The boys of the village, thoughtless and idle, considered it sport to tease her whenever an opportunity offered. She had borne all very patiently until this occasion, when at last losing her temper, she determined to retaliate. She picked up several stones to throw at them. Amongst these was one that attracted her attention owing to its great weight. This she retained. On examination it was found to be a large nugget, which was afterwards sold for several hundreds of pounds.

At this place there is the entrance to a subterranean gallery, blocked by a large stone. There are a number of traditions respecting this. The one most current is, that after removing the stone, and going down some distance, a large deposit of pure

gold exists. No one has to the present been bold enough to overcome superstitious scruples, to lift the stone, and secure the gold. This, like all the other ancient workings in the west of the province of Asturias, is in the Silurian formation. Another of these workings exists further south, but in the same range of hills, and in the same formation. This has also its aqueduct, following the meanderings of the hills for a very long distance, to convey the waters of a lake to the reservoirs that were established near the mouth of the mine. The immense attle heaps prove the extent of the work within. At the foot of this hill a stream runs, and during summer the people of the district wash the sands of this stream to recover the gold contained in them. In winter the same stream is a mighty torrent, sweeping all before it. The rubbish from the old workings is washed into it by the rivulets that rush down the mountain side.

Like everything ancient, legendary lore and tradition have both been busy with this mine. It is said that Doña Urraca, queen of Ramiro, one of the kings of Asturias, was laid in state in one of the galleries of this mine, attended by courtiers formed of massive gold. Within her dismal palace, a lamp that never goes out lights up the whole, and death is the penalty paid by any bold intruder.

Several years ago, cupidity induced a number of men of the district to endeavour to reach those golden figures ; and notwithstanding the prohibition and ban of holy Mother Church, they set to work to

clear out the falls of rock and rubbish from the gallery. They had almost effected this, when they were buried beneath a mass of stone, that fell from the roof. No attempt was ever made to relieve them, and their remains rest to-day where they fell; no one feeling sufficiently bold to make a further attempt, with such a warning before their eyes.

These workings of the Phœnicians and Romans extend from the sea into the province of Leon, a distance of about sixty miles, where they culminate in workings of great extent. The amount of wealth taken away must have been very great. They are worthy of being explored; and it is probable that rich gold mines would be opened out, and a good return for outlay gained, by any one venturing upon the experiment.

The Phœnicians traded extensively along the coast. Its bays gave them shelter from the storms they had to encounter when on their voyages to the *Cassiterides*, where too they were occupied in mining. Is it not therefore reasonable to suppose that the ships of Hiram which carried the gold, copper, and tin to Solomon for the construction of the Temple, received their cargoes in the harbours along this coast; that these metals proceeded from the mines in this country; and that this is one of the veritable Ophirs of Bible history?

In the north of the peninsula the Moors appear to have worked but little. Their footsteps are better traced in Andalusia, New Castille, and Cataluha.

When they were expelled they undoubtedly expected to return again, for much of their wealth was left buried or hidden in the country, and now and again that treasure trove is found.

A number of years ago a poor man owned a very small tenement in a town on the Mediterranean. Fresh water is scarce there, and then, as now, individual efforts were made to obtain a supply. This man had a small yard attached to his house; during his leisure he continued to dig a well in this yard. After sinking to a depth of several metres he came upon a hard substance, which on examination he found to be a large massive gold *cabra* (Anglicè, goat). This was soon transformed into gold onzas. His descendants in the country to-day hold a title which he obtained as a consequent to the finding of this goat.

Moorish documents have been occasionally found recording details of buried treasure. But during the course of ages, landmarks have been removed or so changed as to be unrecognisable, and only tradition assists the seeker. One of these documents records the locking up of a vast treasure on the Mediterranean shore in a mine gallery closed by an iron door, all traces of the entrance having been at the time obliterated, the distance from where the sea washed the shore being the only fixed point to guide the seeker, But the shore contour has been completely changed, and nothing but chance will ever again lay bare this treasure.

Another records that at a certain place there is an old mine shaft having a number of galleries entering from it. One of these is blocked up by a massive bronze door. This door locks in an immense accumulation of treasure. Strange and weird sounds are heard to proceed from this shaft, as if the spirits of the departed Mussulmen continued to hover over and watch their treasure, and to mourn that it could not be removed.

Several years ago, two bold workmen determined to penetrate the mysteries of this enchanted pit-shaft. One let the other down until he had reached the entrance to the first gallery. This he explored, finding several large *amphoras* filled with gold coins. Probably these had been left there because their former owners would have arrived too late to have them put inside the bronze door. These were secured, in the midst of terrible noises from below. They were satisfied with their find, and never again ventured inside the mysterious shaft, although they knew of the gallery blocked by the door. They became extensive landed proprietors, and persons of importance in their district.

Treasure seekers, however, seldom succeed in their enterprise, when searching for wealth hidden away by Moors or others. Almost all such accumulations are discovered accidentally.

But there are other sources of wealth within the country, always to hand, to reward the perseverance of the explorer and capitalist. We refer to the

unwrought ore deposits found everywhere. Capital is of course needed to work with, but results will well repay any outlay.

At a place called Carabia, and within a mile of the coast, where ships can load, there are very extensive deposits of iron ore, yielding from fifty-four to sixty per cent of metallic iron. These deposits have hardly been touched up to the present. The cost of cutting, transport, and shipment is low. The working of these deposits will be a source of large profits.

In more than one part of the province there are pockets and lodes of manganese, having a high percentage of the metal. These, too, have only been partially worked.

Copper lodes and pockets are numerous, and in districts that have only recently been opened up by roads some are found to be rich and abundant. Mining setts may be secured without great difficulty, which would well repay any outlay made upon them. Some of these are within easy reach of railway stations, and at a relatively short distance from a shipping port.

Cinnabar is being mined in one district; but in another there exist one or more lodes which have not yet been touched, although the mineral crops are found on the surface. Few strangers pass that way, although it is within easy reach of a shipping port.

Calamine deposits exist. Some are worked, whilst others have not yet been disturbed. Realgar and

orpiment. There are in various places lodes of these. One of them has not yet been opened out, but the crop at the surface is between three and four feet thick.

Very excellent and abundant coal exists in this province. There are over a hundred heavily pitched seams, which vary in thickness from a few inches to ten feet. Up to the present all workings have been confined to the coal above level. The output is not large; it could be very much increased by the judicious outlay of capital. Labour is cheap, and the selling price of the product is about fifty per cent. higher than that of coals in England. Good results are obtained by coking the small coal, and this is for the most part effected in piles in the open air; but where ovens are employed the results are excellent. A railway having its terminus at Gijon traverses the field. Foreign capitalists would find little difficulty in obtaining collieries.

The presence of coal, readily gotten, and the abundance of iron ores and limestone, have given a great impulse to the iron industries in the district. New forges and mills are being added to the existing ones, and an improvement in the state of the iron market is anxiously desired; when this takes place there will be abundant room for further development and the beneficial introduction of foreign capital.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE HOME OF GIL BLAS.

ONE last lingering look at the quay of Rivadasella and one long little thought of the happy memories of pleasant days it had engendered, and we were off. Eastward and homeward bound *viâ* Llanes, our beloved Unquera, Santillana, and Santander. The new road from Rivadasella to Llanes is perhaps hardly worthy of much notice, except that owing to the kindness of Don Antonio we were introduced at a hamlet on the way to a fine old Spanish gentleman, one of the modern time, whose profuse hospitality strangely connected the modern Athens with a picturesque little Iberian village which must be kept nameless here for reasons of our *quondam* host.

We arrived tired, dirty, and travel-stained; the evil spirits who run the Northern Spanish diligences had possession of us; and we were received, as we expected, with an exact imitation of the politeness of Don Antonio of Rivadasella. After a repast worthy of Lucullus (but there was garlic in the dishes) we were then introduced to a certain sanctum sanctorum, and there, for our special edification and

delight, some Highland whisky was displayed, and our noble host informed us that for nearly eighty years that particular brand of whisky had never been absent from his *casa*. A grandfather of his had saved the life of a wounded Scottish officer during the fighting days of the Peninsular War, and on our countryman's return to Auld Reekie, he had in gratitude forwarded sundry excellent gallons of Highland whisky blended by the original founders of the well-known firm in Scotland of Messrs. J. & G. Stewart, of Edinburgh. That whisky took the Asturian magnate's taste, and so it is that from 1810 to this hour a certain mansion in the north of the Asturias has never been free from the presence of the strong waters which hail from the modern Athens. We never felt our ignorance of the details of the great Peninsular War till that evening. With the ceaseless strife and turmoil of an ever-growing empire here it has become a shadowy dream of the past. In the houses of the ancient families of Northern Spain the fierce struggle is remembered with a keenness which recalls memories of school-boy history, of how the troops under the Union Jack were the principal factors in the terrible warfare that ended in marshal after marshal of France being hurled back from Spain to their own country over the Pyrenees. Among other relic of the past our host boasts a magnificent specimen of a claymore and a veritable mull of the most approved proportions.

After dreaming of an offensive and defensive alliance between the kingdoms of Scotland and the Asturias, or some such "mixed" matters, we found ourselves after a morning repast of fruit and coffee starting for the little seaport of Llanes, and about which there is not much to say, except that we stopped again at the Fonda de la Navarra and visited the church, which is interesting to those who care to study Gothic architecture with Romanesque ornamentation. The gentleman we expected to meet at Llanes never turned up, so we pushed on by the stuffy little bathing-machine-like coach, and were glad indeed to reach once more that haven of rest, Unquera; and this time we slept on the right, or Unquera side proper of the musical Deva. It will be noted that coming eastward we have closely followed the coast-line by means of the new roads just finished, and thus the traveller is enabled to vary his routes.

There is a most delightful excursion from Unquera that really should not be missed by the tourist. By taking the main road from the village as far as the wine-shop of Señor Blanchard, or by crossing (only at low tide) the meadows on the river-bank, a road leads round the mountain-side to the actual junction of the Deva with the sea bay, where in fact—

"She mingles her waters with the ocean,
She sings in the chorus of the sea,
And her soul from the tumult of the waters
Will never more be jubilant and free.

"There is no home-returning for the waters
To the mountains whence they came glad and free,
There is no happy ditty for the river
That has sung in the chorus of the sea."

The views which will here repay the traveller are of great beauty; beneath him is still the blue Deva, showing its one or two channels passing through banks of sand, which glisten like silver in the sunshine; facing him and towering behind him are the Cantabrian spurs that, sentinel-like, guard the port of Tina Mayor; to his left stretch the dark blue, and it may be white-crested, waves of that corner of the Atlantic called the Bay of Biscay. Continuing the path slightly away from the sea front, the pedestrian will come to a delightful green sward sloping down towards the sea, surrounded on all sides by every variety of heath; passing through a romantically situated wood he will be astonished to find he has reached a little bay or cove which should entrance him. You step from the most luxuriant vegetation of the temperate zone on to sands which vie with Scarborough and put Ramsgate to the blush. On your left is a promontory of rock caverned by the action of the sea in the most fantastic manner. On your right, after the long firm stretch of sand comes again the vegetation anxious to kiss the sea, as indeed it does in the "summer isles of Eden set in purple spheres of sea." And the chances are nine to one that you will have this exquisite little spot to yourself. Save

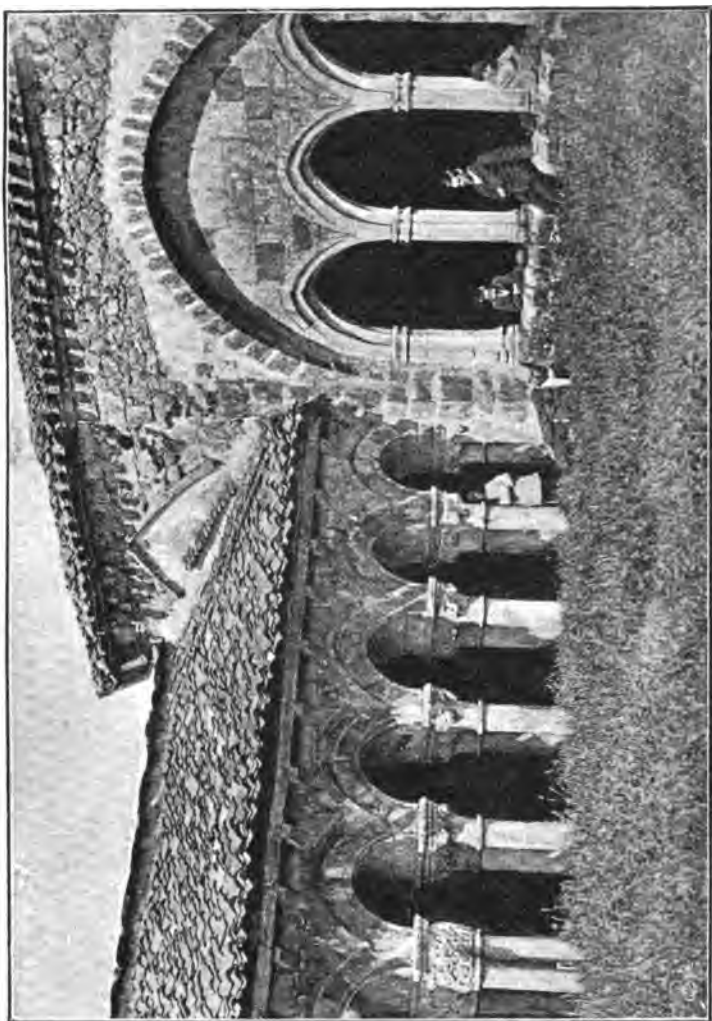
the murmur of the placid sea and the carolling of the birds in the glades behind us as we strolled along the sand, there only remained the silence of absolute rest. Those far too brief hours spent at the little bay near Unquera were perfect revelry to us, for—

“There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture in the lonely shore,
There is society where none intrudes
By the deep sea, and music in its roar.”

Although we have christened this chapter The Home of Gil Blas, we have not much to say about Santillana, where the great poet was born, apart from its ecclesiastical interest, except that there is excellent fishing on the river Besaya, and that the town is a very pretty one.

The *Colegiata* is certainly one of the finest churches in the province. It is Romanesque of the twelfth century with some slight modification of the Pointed style inside the church. The fine retable of the fifteenth century, covered with sculptures of that and the succeeding hundred years, is well worth observation. The clergy here have in their keeping some fine jewels, notably a splendid silver processional cross.

Beyond doubt visit the cloister, which with the exterior belongs to the primitive work; it is sadly dilapidated. The capitals are extremely fine; they represent subjects from the Passion and Crucifixion of our Lord, and the legend of Santa Juliana and the Devil,



CLOISTERS IN SANTILLANA.

and on one of them is depicted the Last Judgment. The general effect with the vine twining round the arches is highly picturesque. Iñigo Lopez de Mendoza, the friend of Juan II. and the Mæcenæ of Spain, assumed the saint's name for his title of Marquis, and gave it to this his city. The Casa Consistorial, in the Plaza, is a fine building, and worthy of a town which gave birth to the architect of the Escorial, Juan de Herrera. The streets are most picturesque, and numberless old houses abound, but unless the tourist is constituted very differently from us, he will not care to personally examine every nook and corner or crevice in every house which is presumably old. Besides, we are hurrying homeward, and the Bay of Santander with its London Liverpool bound steamer, is almost in sight, so to speak.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN THE PATHLESS WOODS.

IN the preceding chapter we quoted some lines as to solitude but as there are two sides to every question we would show the reverse picture to the "pleasure in the pathless woods" by describing an adventure of one of our authors in the forests around Comillas, given in the first person singular, as at the time written by him, in his diary.

"I had been residing for some weeks in the lovely spot Unquera, scarcely seeing even a stray traveller, when one morning a couple of private coaches turned up filled with ladies and gentlemen. Such an unusual occurrence threw the small village into commotion, more especially as King Alfonso was known to be on the coast ; however, it was not royalty but the great banker, M. Riera, of Paris, who had taken a large party from his sea-side residence of Cotarucá to see the beauties of the interior. Being the only "dressed" inhabitant I was spotted and interviewed, and after showing the party round the neighbourhood received an invitation to visit M. Riera at his palace on the following day.

Comillas is on the coast, and as the main road from Unquera dives into the interior after leaving the ancient town of San Vincente de la Barquera, I left the morning coach at the junction of the two roads some three miles from the last-named town. It was a beautiful and warm morning when, clad in my best suit of serge, I descended from Plenty o' water's conveyance at the little inn where the two roads meet, and was left alone to do the best I could to reach Comillas some eight miles distant. Fortunately, a cart, which in England would be called a ginger-beer cart, turned up, taking mineral waters to Comillas, and I was politely offered the only seat on the concern, barring that of the driver, our companion being large boxes of bottles of all kinds of beverages, and in this manner I was driven to the town which, a few days before, held royalty, and to the house of the princely banker, who had just entertained Alfonso XII. and his mother-queen Isabella.

The day was extremely hot and the road uninteresting, the greater part of it being over lagoons formed by the sea, with few houses or inhabitants visible, and for sound nothing but the restless roar of the ocean and the plaintive tones of the immense quantities of sea birds hovering about. From a small flour-mill at the most easterly point of the large lagoon the road rises, and, passing through an avenue of a mile or so of poplars, ushered me into the town of Comillas itself, a pretty little "seaport,"

with harbour for yachts or small steamers, and a lovely sandy bathing beach. Here dwells the great Lopez, owner of the immense steamers that trade between Spain and Havana, and, as in stately procession they move out of Santander for their ocean trip, they near the shore, and give their owner a parting greeting by sound of cannon, rocket, or whistle.

The King had been staying with Señor Lopez, who lives in a large but unpretending house near the sea-level, when he espied the most prominent feature of the landscape, "La Coteruca," a house—the one to which I was invited—poised on the top of a conical-shaped hill, quite overlooking the whole town, harbour, and bay. Mons. Riera, having heard the King's admiration of his residence, in duty, although an alien, threw it open to him; and I understand his Majesty was so pleased with his reception as to give the owner the distinguished honour of the order of "Isabella Catolica."

I arrived a day or two later. Royalty had gone, but the right royal host had the same reception for the humble as for the great; and I may say, in my many journeys all over the world, I have never seen such lavish hospitality on so short and unintroducted acquaintance. Mons. Riera's house is a palace; its interior perfect in its arrangements, and its furnishing comprises the highest Parisian cultivated taste.

After lunch—a regal dinner would be more proper

in description—as the day still continued beautiful, it was suggested that a party should be formed to ride and walk over the mountains to what is known as the Hermitage, a little town perched on another and higher conical hill, embedded in grand old timbered slopes some five miles distant. We set out in our friend's carriages, and, as far as cosmopolitanism is concerned, a well-wisher to all nationalities could not have chosen a happier group. Spain was represented by three young ladies and their duenna, inhabitants of Barcelona; France, by the Paris banker and his spouse; Germany, by a most amiable young man whose name I forget; and England, by another lady and her son and your humble servant the writer.

We drove out in three carriages and only halted when the road ended, the whole party proceeding then on foot. The day was bright and the companionship pleasant, as the whole party spoke English if they wished, but French, Spanish, and German were often intermixed for the sake of variety. The village *cura* had just joined us, when a sudden change came over the scene of wit, laughter and amusement. Clouds from the west rolled towards us, and almost before we could get shelter a heavy thunderstorm broke over us. The *cura* saved us however, by conducting us to a little chapel, which just held the party and no more. The duenna, after half an hour of torrents of rain, marshalled her girls and would go back, the *cura*—a good young churchman—

as in duty bound, following the weaker of his flock. Our English lady, her son and myself determined, however, *coûte qui coûte*, to do what we went out for, and see the Hermitage. No waterproofs, no umbrellas; but at a little village near we were supplied with three real old "gamps," and in the most drenching rain made boldly for the mountain to whose summit we aspired. I do not speak for her son and myself, as both were accustomed to rough it anywhere, but the lady showed the greatest courage; smothered in mud, wet up to the knees, having to cross deep water on stepping stones, and get over and under fences of the most ingenious construction; and throughout she was cheerful, lively, and the encourager of the trio.

The rain stopped, and we achieved our object—nothing when we got there but a ruined tower; but our reward was the moral one of having battled nature and won. Here commenced the second lesson, for from this towering height in the now clear atmosphere I could discern the main road to San Vincente and Unquera; and, although five o'clock, I insisted that I could find my way back without again troubling my kind good host of the "Coteruca." I was not to be dissuaded, and my companions left me, returning to Comillas by themselves; but, as then I knew little Spanish, they carefully instructed an old woman clad in the most humble attire, and wearing heavy wooden shoes, to put me in the straightest course to the main road. The pleasures of the

pathless woods now began. The old woman and I took a dive into the dense forest below us, she leading the way, clogs and all, through dense and tangled briars and ferns of large size which, out of compliment to our prowess, showered upon us at every footstep their accumulated rain of the afternoon, wetting us up to the middle before we had gone a hundred yards; the ground was clayey, and, as nice little pools of water stood at every turn of the goat-track we were on, ever and anon she lost her *sabots*, and I gave a ferruginous tint to my nether garments by great splashes in this mudlarking forest. Cheerily we proceeded, however, to the bottom, when to my dismay the old lady, more by signs than speech, informed me she had mistaken the road, and perforce I had to trudge up again through similar troubles to the point at which we had started, some 800 feet above. What her little game was I did not know; it was now nearly 6 P.M. and the "shades of night were falling fast;" the sky was stormy-looking, and I had not progressed one inch. At last a cry from her of "*Aquí es!*" (Here it is!) and I was shown a delightful deep rutted bullock-track on the ridge of the mountain; and without ceremony she left me, merely pointing to the left and saying "*siempre,*" which I knew to be "always." Bounding lightly, glad to get rid of my so-called guide, I commenced and continued a half run, half walk through the forest, following the ruts, but with the light from the sky almost excluded by the heavy foliage of the

trees above; no sound to stir the stillness of the fast approaching night. There was only one track, and it was easy to follow by the glistening water in the ruts. Suddenly two roads converged to right and left, and, following my instructions, I took the left, to be landed in a few minutes in a *cul de sac* of trees, the woodman's last working in that direction. No other opening being apparent, I retraced my steps and took the only alternative, the road to the right, having as only consolation that some day I must in that direction reach the sea and cross the main road to Comillas I had travelled on in the morning. All went well until I reached the confines of the forest, and, still on the top of the ridge, had to descend. "Bullocks can go where even man scarce treads," and this I found to my utter discomfort. Bullock-tracks have ruts too for miles some two to three feet deep: Mr. Bullock marching on the hillock between, and leaving Messrs. the wheels of his cart to go at any angle they please; but to the pedestrian in the dark, with a steep descent on clayey soil just nicely oiled by nature's lubricator, I do not recommend a trial, unless clad in a Boyton suit well padded. How I stumbled, how I fell, how I was covered from head to foot with mud, must be imagined. I have seen ladies sit down and cry over dangers they had perforce to meet, and really, at this moment, hardy mountaineer as I was, I felt more sympathy for them, and nearly imitated them in my despair, for, chilled to the bone, no pocket-flask,

no weapons, and in pitch darkness, that now could almost be felt, I arrived at the foot of the mountain on the confines of an immense lagoon, and here lost the track. I had tobacco and some matches not quite wet through, and commenced half an hour's search for any trace of the bullock carts, and at last found it went straight into a stream, how deep I did not know. I was desperate, and walked straight in, landing fortunately on the other side after a knee-deep immersion, only to find myself in face of a bog, my first step into which took one leg nearly up to the middle, and I had to perform a dexterous feat to extricate myself. At this point, as I believe, the driver of carts lets his bullocks have their own way and flounder at their leisure, for some distance off is the road, or semi-road, over which, when found, I crossed.

The ground here began to rise, and I must have crossed quite two miles of moorland, black and damp, but cheerful as compared with previous experience. I was congratulating myself that I was going right, and should have no more troubles, more especially as some miles away seaward I descried a little twinkling light. Oh, dear farthing dip, or sixpenny petroleum lamp, how I blessed you 'at the time, and how my spirits rose to the highest pitch in an instant! to be damped however before I reached my goal, by another beautiful stream to be crossed with icy water up to the middle. The light was my haven, and what cared I for water or mud? I cleared all obstacles, and found myself climbing the back

garden wall of a little inn on the main road near the sea. It was* 9 P.M. when through the back door I made my appearance amongst the village gossips, who, as I could not explain, made but little remark—I presume saying to themselves, “Here’s another mad Englishman!” I was afraid of fever if I sat down, so, bolting a couple of glasses of neat gin, I commenced my trudge towards San Vincente, not daring to return to Comillas, which is much nearer, for the plight I was in was not fit for the palace I had left. I must say I was subsequently rated severely by Mons. Riera for not returning to him; he said I ought to have known all he had was at my disposal. I walked fast on the lonely main road over the lagoons, not meeting a soul for the four or five miles I traversed, and my nerves were now a little shaken. My ears were alert for any sound, and once a couple of whistles from the neighbouring hills made me quicken my pace and take up a large stone as defence in case of attack. The clouds had broken, and the night was still as death, and very warm; the stars shone brightly, and in their company and with the pretty fire-flies as my companions I arrived at the junction of the two roads, and being nearly dry, both inwardly and outwardly, spent a half-hour by a little wood fire. Mine host asked me to wait for the coach, which would pass about midnight, saying, as he subsequently told me, that there was another storm brewing; but now being strong and hearty, and feeling no ill effects from my previous fatigue, I

determined to do the remaining three miles or so on the main road, and take the coach from San Vincente. I had just moved on about half a mile or so when there came down the heaviest thunder-storm I have ever witnessed in this country, and there fell a deluge of rain, which in two minutes washed away all my stains and soaked through everything—shirt, pocket-book and all. Not a shelter of any kind occurs on this road, which faces west, so there was no option but to meet the splashes of God's buckets, whose contents were poured on me for an hour and a half; and, as wet as if I had fallen into the sea, I arrived at the coach-office, the only house open at this time of night, at "24" o'clock. I took nearly all my clothes off, squeezed a gallon or so of water out of them, and, feeling bitterly cold, drank a large tumbler of neat spirit, and sucked some half-dozen raw eggs. Fortunately the coach was not long turning up, and to that fact and to the other, that I was squeezed into the interior and jammed up between two extremely fat and perspiring females, I attribute the circumstance that the next morning I had neither rheumatism, fever nor ague, but, to use a rather slang phrase, "was as right as a sand-boy."

To such experiences as the foregoing and mid-winter expeditions to Covadonga the author of 'My Tour in the Himalayas' is heartily welcome. He who wrote 'Coral Lands' envieth him not. This chapter should be headed "Perverseness punished and obstinacy rewarded."

The Highlands of Cantabria have been ascended, surrounded and inspected, and our task is nearly over. If the reader will enjoy a little of the pleasure in perusing the foregoing chapters that we did in "pioneering" Cantabria, we shall feel perfectly satisfied. But we do not only want people to read, we want people to go, and therefore, in all humility, would give a word or two of advice to those who will follow our track. The show is over, and only the epilogue has to be added.

CHAPTER XXX.

FOR THOSE WHO FOLLOW OUR TRACK.

No words of ours can add to the value of the following remarks of the late Mr. Ford, and we therefore reproduce them very nearly *in extenso*.

Since Spain appears, on the map, to be a square and most compact kingdom, politicians and geographers have treated it and its inhabitants as one and the same ; practically, however, this treatment of the peninsula is impossible, since both the political and social instincts of each once independent province vary the one from the other, no less than do the climate and productions themselves. No spick and span constitution, be it printed on parchment or calico, can at once efface traditions and antipathies of a thousand years ; the accidents of localities and provincial nationalities, out of which they have sprung, remain too deeply dyed to be forthwith discharged by theorists. Spaniards may talk and boast of their country, of their *Patria* : every single individual in his heart really only loves his native province, and only considers as his fellow-countryman, *su paisano*—a most binding and endearing

word—one born in the same *locality* as himself: hence it is not easy to predicate much in regard to the “Spains” and Spaniards in general, which will hold quite good as to each particular portion ruled by the sovereign of *Las Españas*, the *plural* title given to the chief of the federal union of this kingdom. *Españolismo* may be said to consist in a love for a common faith and king, and in a coincidence of resistance to a foreign dictation. The deep sentiments of religion, loyalty, and independence, noble characteristics indeed, have been sapped in our time by the influence of transpyrenean revolutions, and by Bourbon misgovernment.

Two general observations may be premised. *First.* The people of Spain, the so-called Lower Orders, are in some respects superior to those who arrogate to themselves the title of being their betters, and in most respects are more interesting. The masses, the least spoilt and the most national, stand like pillars amid ruins, and on them the edifice of Spain’s greatness must be reconstructed. This may have arisen, in this land of anomalies, from the peculiar policy of government in Church and State, where the possessors of religious and civil monopolies who dreaded knowledge as power, pressed heavily on the noble and rich, dwarfing down their bodies by intermarriages, and all but extinguishing their minds by Inquisitions; while the people, overlooked in the obscurity of poverty, were allowed to grow out to their full growth like wild weeds of a rich soil.

They, in fact, have long enjoyed under despotisms of Church and State a practical and personal independence, the good results of which are evident in their stalwart frames and manly bearing.

Secondly. A distinction must ever be made between the Spaniard in his *individual* and in his *collective* capacity, and still more in an *official* one: taken by himself, he is true and valiant: the nicety of his *pundonor*, or point of personal honour, is proverbial; to him as an individual you may safely trust your life, fair fame, and purse. Yet history, treating of these individuals in the collective *juntados*, presents the foulest examples of misbehaviour in the field, of Punic bad faith in the cabinet, of bankruptcy and repudiation on the exchange. This may be, however, entirely owing to the deteriorating influence of bad government, by which the individual Spaniard, like the monk in a convent, has been hitherto fused into the corporate. The political atmosphere has been too infectious to avoid some corruption; and while the Spaniard individually felt that his character was only in safe keeping when in his own hands (and no man of any nation knows better *then* how to uphold it), yet when linked with others his self-pride has lent itself readily to feelings of mistrust, until self-interest has been too often uppermost. From suspecting that he would be sold and sacrificed by others, he has usually been willing to float down the turbid stream like the rest: yet *official* employment has never entirely destroyed the private good qualities of

the *empleado*, and he has ever been ready to do justice when appealed to as an *individual*.

The foregoing of course applies to all parts of the peninsula, and the allusion to provincial jealousies and the like is especially true about the beautiful provinces it has been our privilege to describe in the foregoing pages.

But we have even more practical advice than that given by Mr. Ford. We would respectfully ask those who follow our steps, and wisely go and enjoy the contemplation of bountiful nature in Spain as we have enjoyed it, to bear in mind above all things that the people they will sojourn among are essentially a race of ladies and gentlemen, and deserve to be treated as such. The cringing and purse-emptying Swiss or French landlord does not exist in the Highlands of Cantabria, and long may his absence be relished. The tourist will meet with all ranks, but must regard their members as his equals. He should extend the same courtesy to the beggar as he would give to the titled grandee. He will find perhaps that the former bears more characteristic marks of the true gentleman than the latter. Whatever it may be in boastful Britain, poverty is no crime in Spain; and the *usted con Dios* applies equally to the highest and the lowest.

Patience is a virtue in all times and in all places, and its exercise is exceedingly useful in the land of *mañana*. The *malua* of the Fijian is as nothing to the natural dilatoriness of the ordinary Spaniard, especially if he is a government official. He does not live in a

country where it is possible to breakfast at Brighton, and dine the same day comfortably at Edinburgh. The Civil Guard of Spain are, we repeat, a body of gentlemen, and should be treated as such; they will do all they can for the traveller who is civil and polite, but they will stand no nonsense. It is better to have a passport, and, if carrying arms, get the necessary permit. When a religious procession passes, remember the respect due to the religion of the majority, and if not of the ancient creed of Christendom at least raise the hat. The effort will cost little and will gain you a warm-hearted people's liking. In the churches remember as you pass the high altar that, as Mr. Ford remarks, "the people amid whom you live believe that on that altar the Incarnate Host dwells where the two or three are gathered together; and, in order not to offend, every considerate Protestant should manifest an outward respect for the sanctity of the place and the custom of bowing and of genuflecting." Mr. Ford puts this advice in italics; we trust they are not needed for the readers of this work.

Have nothing to do with politics; it is a heart-breaking business in any country, and is worse in Spain. If the loveliness of God's creation in the Cantabrian mountains will not satisfy, it would be far better to worship the caucus in the immediate vicinity of Bow Creek.

Spanish politeness is not that of the Parisian, who raises his hat with infinite grace and then lets the

lady walk in the gutter. Speaking as Britons, we are proud to say that as a rule our people want little education in respect to the fair sex, but Spanish gallantry should be noted. It is deeper seated than the hat-rim foolishness of the wind-bags of the Boulevards, but then a Cantabrian will hardly admit that a Parisian can be a gentleman. Certainly their reigning monarch had but a poor sample of their manners when last in the so-called capital of civilisation. When in a Spanish town with a lady do not walk arm in arm with her. It is contrary to etiquette, and the self-denial will in some cases do good.

Early rising is always commendable, and should be the rule of the traveller in Cantabria. A light apology for a breakfast in the bedroom or saloon, and two substantial meals at midday and about eight in the evening, is the custom of the country and will suit most people. They rest a good deal in the middle of the day, and the churches, etc., are generally closed from noon to three in the afternoon. We have said that when it rains in Cantabria there is no mistake about it, therefore a waterproof coat or cloak should form an essential part of the *impedimenta*. It should be borne in mind too that in the remote fastnesses of the Asturias medical men are few and far between, and it is just as well to take some easily carried remedies. If the liver gets a little out of order by change of diet and the like, we have found a bottle of Lamplough's Saline very valuable medicine, and it makes also a cool refresh-

ing drink when mixed with the pure water of some mountain stream. Dr. Collis Browne's chlorodyne is a good thing to put in the knapsack or valise; it is especially useful for those who are likely to suffer from neuralgic pains and from varieties of climate. Between the weather on the Picos and that at Liebana a great gulf is fixed. To slightly alter the dicta of a well-known writer: Never measure Spanish things by an English standard, nor seek for moles in bright eyes. Scout all imaginary dismals, dangers, and difficulties, which become as nothing when manfully met, and especially when on the road and in the Fonda. View Cantabria and her inhabitants *en couleur de rose*, and it will go hard if some of that agreeable tint be not reflected on such a judicious observer, for like a mirror the Spaniard returns your smile or frown, your courtesy or contumely; nor is it of any use going to Rome if you quarrel with the Holy Father. Strain a point or two therefore to make things pleasant. Do not expect every morning at nine a rasher of bacon and a cup of the "best tea imported"; try to forget that you ever "tubbed it" in the privacy of your bedroom: if a bold person of the (so called) stronger sex, you may in some retired spot take a bath in a mountain stream, but otherwise you will require to wait till you get back to Santander. Medicinal baths like those at La Hermida suit not the tastes of the robust Briton. Abandon all hope too of lavatories and the like. A Spanish "Chalet

Company" has not entered the head of the wildest "promoter" in the peninsula. Unlike the custom of France, the Fondas do supply you with soap, but it is generally poor stuff; therefore take a cake of healthy Terebene with a sponge in a bag, and now and again enjoy the luxury of something approaching a wash: but be not over sanguine in these matters; it is not everybody who can bathe in a wine-glass.

Except in rare cases and for exceptional services, do not give "tips" in the mountain inns; they are not expected, and it is a miserable thing to go around this world as an apostle of the evil habits which obtain here. Unless the traveller intends graduating for a high-class lunatic asylum, he will let the Basque language alone; it is a painful subject to be contemplated at a respectful distance with reverential awe. Bradshaw's Spanish Phrase Pocket-book is better than none, but it is far from perfection. How is it that as a rule these works fall so short of their purpose—but, as we have said, a very little Spanish will go a very long way even in the villages which know the white mantle of almost eternal snow. It is of course necessary to carry money, but the Northern Spanish tourist will find that he need not overburden himself with the weight of too much cash. Cantabria is as yet virgin soil so far as regards 'Arry and 'Arriet, and gentry of the rich and "shoddy" class, and long may it remain so. And now we would say a few words as to how to reach the localities we have

been describing. The traveller can of course go overland viâ Paris and Bordeaux to the Spanish frontier, entering the Spanish railway system at Irun, and so reach San Sebastian, Bilbao, or Santander viâ Venta de Baños junction on the main line to Madrid; but it is a tiresome business this long railway journey, and we say to the reader who fears not the bay in a comfortable steamer: Embark at Liverpool on board one of Messrs. McAndrew & Company's regular Spanish line of steamers for Passages (or Pasages) and Santander (the fare is £5); "do" the Picos as we have described; and returning to Santander from Gijon viâ Llanes, coach it to Bilbao, through Casho Urdiales, and then take train viâ Miranda to San Sebastian for Bordeaux, and thence home to London or Liverpool by long sea or overland. The large steamers of the Pacific Steam Navigation Company leave Bordeaux for the seaport on the Mersey about three times a month, the fares being 135 francs first class, 80 francs second class, and 50 francs third class, provisions included. The General Steam Navigation Company run a weekly steamer from Bordeaux to London, the fares being £3 first cabin, and £2 second cabin, but provisions in this case are extra. The boats of this London service to and from Bordeaux are good, well-equipped steamers, and the table of the General Steam Navigation Company's line is always a good one. If the tourist wishes to see Bilbao first, and loves the salt-water so dear to the authors of

this book, he cannot do better than avail himself of Messrs. Robert MacAndrew & Company's London Line of Spanish Steamers. The office of this Company is Suffolk House, Laurence Pountney Hill, and their steamers sail for Bilbao frequently, the fare being £5.

We have very pleasant recollections of voyages in Messrs. MacAndrew's *Bilbao*, and have spent many an instructive hour with her English engineer, Mr. Williams. Those who have interest at court with the coal and iron princes of South Wales or Glasgow can, if they fear not a coal cargo out and iron ore home, get a passage to Bilbao or Santander from Cardiff, Newport, or the Clyde, at a merely nominal charge. Neither Ware's "yachts" nor those of Messrs. Cory are floating palaces of the "Orient" order, but we have thoroughly enjoyed our "five tides" in vessels of those lines. And there are the routes by which the tourist who is tired of Margate jetty or Scarborough sands, can reach the untrodden fields which we have christened the Highlands of Cantabria, and if he so likes it, revel not only in their exquisite scenery, prospect for their unsought for wealth, but go about with a gun and shoot the bears and chamois which roam around the desolate heights of Avila. And this reminds us that the correct chamois hunting boots with their double rubber soles are best obtained at Messrs. Hall's in Bishopsgate Street, and Mr. Harrison advises that the express rifles which got in most of the handsome

chamois bag of August, 1884, were those of Messrs. Rigby and Co. of Dublin and London.

And now, good reader, we are about to say farewell. "We together" have gazed for a second at the smiling city of San Sebastian from the whilom bloodstained slopes of its Castle, we have heard the murmuring roar of the death-dealing sea on Bilbao bar, have surveyed the iron mountains around that *ciudad invicta*, and after reading the *Daily Telegraph* at the Café Suizo at Santander, have penetrated the great fortress of the Picos de Europa. The busy little Deva has sung our welcome as we walked through the grand gorges it has made for its diminutive self, and leaving its water music behind us we have gone up to the dizzy heights and found out the homes of the chamois. We have been in the Holy Room at Oviedo, and wandered with some Spanish friends at Gijon after jet mines and the like. Don Antonio has taken us to see his gaol-bird friend at Cangas, and the tomb of his glorious ancestor at Covadonga. We can now boast the escallop shell in our arms, for we have been pilgrims to the birth-place of Spain, and we know also where the "Barcelona" nuts come from.

Regardless of a falling metal market, we have been seeking for copper, and one at least of us has been getting himself ridiculously wet in "pathless woods" which he went exploring all alone in the dark; and having told you all we know about the Highlands of Cantabria, we can only say that we

hope when you finish these pages you will admit that we have not been more than necessarily prosy or pedantic in the information we have been enabled to publish to the world. You have journeyed with us through the Highlands of Cantabria, and the Blue Peter of our Britain bound steamer flies to the southern breeze in the harbour of Santander. Have you found us passable good company? If so, we will take you next year to Santiago Compostella, and you shall travel with us in the wild region surrounding that venerable shrine where rests the body of the patron saint of Spain. *Vaya usted con Dios.*

MARS ROSS.

H. STONEHEWER-COOPER.

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